2d Artist

Concept Art, Matte Painting Magazine

Speed Painting

Emrah Elmasli and Nathaniel West have tackled this month's Speed Painting topic: 'Ailen Hot Air Balloon'. Find out how they interpreted this month's brief, inside...

Editorial
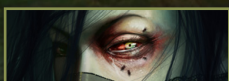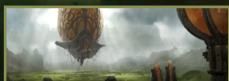
Welcome to **Issue 24** of 2DArtist, which means 2DArtist has now been going strong for 2 years! So we'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support over the past 2 years, and to encourage you all to continue supporting us through 2008, as we wouldn't be able to do this without you all. The cover work for this month's issue was created by the very talented Jason (Wei Che) Juan, who we have interviewed this month, starting on **page 5**. Our other interviews this month delve into the lives, talents and experiences of Morgan Yon (see **page 13**) and Luis Melo (see **page 33**). Morgan Yon has been keeping us busy this month with all the fantastic updates he's been making to his portfolio, and our interview really gets to the heart of this truly amazing artist, so take a look at the interview and prepare your eyes for a treat! Our Speed Paintings are really great this month, too; we were amazed at just how close our 2 artists' concepts came, and then at just how different their interpretations were - really great stuff so check out **page 93**! As always, there just isn't enough space for my waffle, so I'm just going to quickly suggest that you check out the content listed to the right, go to the page of your choice, and get stuck in! As that's what we create this magazine for, after all! So get creative and have a great Christmas, everyone! See you in 2008... **Ed**.

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Contents

Magazine Viewing Tips

For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed. Download it for free, here: **DOWNLOAD**. To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large, landscape image. **1.** Open the magazine in Reader; **2.** Go to the 'View' menu, then 'Page display'; **3.** Select 'Two-up Continuous', making sure that 'Show Cover Page' is also selected.

Contributing Artists

Every month, many creatives and artists around the world contribute to 3DCreative & 2DArtist magazines. Here you can read all about them. If you would like to be a part of 3DCreative or 2DArtist magazine, please contact lynette@zoopublishing.com.

Jason Wei-Chei Juan

Is a Character Artist born in Taichung, Taiwan in 1977 who has always wanted to be an artist. After finishing a BA Degree in Maths in 2001, with his deeply embedded dream of being an artist, he decided to take his first drawing class at the Art Institute of Seattle. In 2004 he began his career, working on the Narnia DS game. In 2005, he took things further by learning oil painting. He currently works at Arena.Net as a Character Artist.

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Morgan Yon

Is 25 years old, and after graduating from art school in 2005 he joined Quantic Dream Studio, in Paris, working as a concept artist characters/sets. His interest in concept art began just 2 years ago, and he hope to remain in the video game industry for as long as possible. He's also trying to make his first steps in the comic strip world, which has already interested him for years. He's currently focused on painting landscapes and learning 3D modelling.

www.morgan-yon.com   morgan.yon@gmail.com
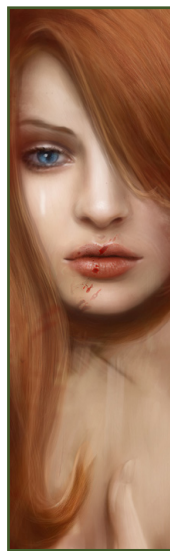
Anne Pogoda

Is a 2D artist working on concepts, illustrations and such. She graduated from the Art Akademy and now works freelance in Berlin, Germany. Anne made her first attempts at digital art in 2003. For 3 years she has been working on 2D illustrations and concept art with a Wacom Graphire in Photoshop and Painter. She will also be learning ZBrush 3 and Maya and would like to do some game or film related stuff later.

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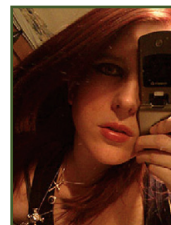
Emrah Elmasli

Is a Turkish Concept Artist based in London, UK. He's working at Lionhead Studios as a full-time Senior Concept Artist. Before coming to UK, he was a freelance artist living in Istanbul, Turkey, and was working for various clients like Crystal Dynamics, Irrational Games, CGToolkit and Fantasy Flight Games, as well as ad agencies in Istanbul. He then found himself in the UK. He draws everyday and enjoys the city in his spare time.

www.partycule.com   emrah@partycule.com
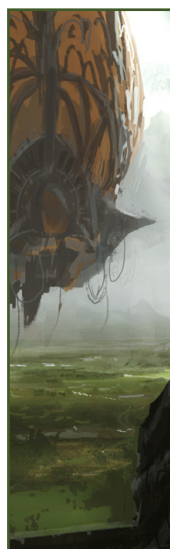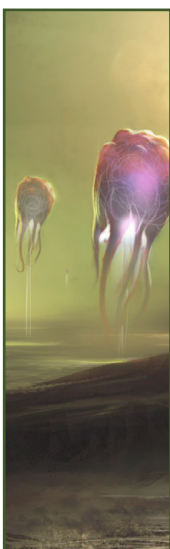
Nathaniel West

Is a freelance illustrator and designer residing in Los Angeles. He acts as an integral part of many exciting projects all around the world, which include themed entertainment, films and video games. He is currently focusing on Production Design for feature films, as well as continuing to work with clients to design meaningful spaces on various freelance projects.

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Matt Dangler

Matt believes that living as a "self actualizer" will help him reach a higher state of consciousness, and will also bring clarity to the meaning of his place in existence. Ideally, he hopes that his paintings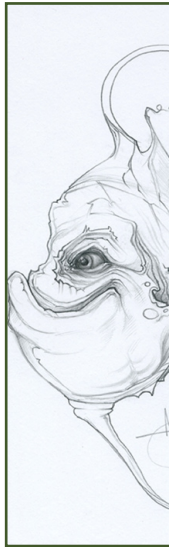 will serve as a window into the viewer's sub-conscious, where they will find their undiscovered qualities and secrets deep within themselves. You can find his newest "windows" inside Gallery 1988, where he is currently represented.

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Joel Carlo

Is a multimedia developer residing out in Denver, Colorado. His career as an artist has spanned over the last 14 years and includes work in both traditional and digital media, web design, print, and motion graphics for broadcasting. His client list is varied and ranges from Commissioned work for small studio projects to larger clients such as Future Publishing, Burrows & Chapin, The Ayzenberg Group, NASCAR, Dodge, Toyota and Fox Television.

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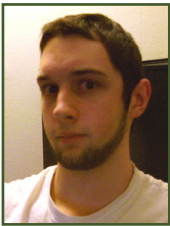
James Wolf Strehle

James is a passionate and dedicated Freelance Illustrator fresh out of the Art institute of Boston. Although he is young, he has already began making his mark in the art world. He hopes to one day work as a concept artist in a high profile studio, but for the time being he is quite comfortable working freelance, ready to take on anything and everything that comes his way!

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Denis Zilber

Is a freelance illustrator and animator from Israel. His primary field is mostly digital art, although he's had a great opportunity to study fine arts since he was kid, because both of his parents are also artists. He creates concepts and backgrounds for animated series, character design, illustrations of all kinds and 2D animation. He also does digital sculpting and 3D animation, for self-education.

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Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazine?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, Making Of writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work here: lynette@zoopublishing.com

exclusive property of quantic dream studio   image by Morgan Yon

Jason Juan is a young artist who, after studying Maths, decided to take a life drawing class in Seattle. This led to a career in the games industry where he currently works at Arena.net as a character artist, whose credits include the Narnia DS game and the very successful Guild Wars

JASON JUAN

[WEI CHE]

WEI CHE
JASON JUAN

Can you tell us a little about your background and how you came to work on Guild Wars?
I got a BA Degree in Maths in 2001, when I was in Taiwan, and after 2 years duty in the military I decided to take my first official drawing class at the Art Institute of Seattle, in 2004. Right after I graduated, I met many Arena.net artists in a life drawing session that I usually attend. This was how I got the chance to know this cool art team and it inspired me to want to work with them.

What was it specifically that prompted you to take that first life drawing class in 2004?
I learned Maya in 2003 in Taiwan. I followed a very intensive class, called "DFTC Maya Training", for about one month. I thought that when I learnt how to use Maya I would know how to make good 3D characters, but I realised that just knowing each function in the program doesn't give you an idea of how to make better characters, and so I decided to start from the very basics through drawing classes.

You have a number of life studies on your website. How important are the life drawing classes to you with regards to your concept work?
Before the Art school, I didn't even know what life drawing was, and I had no idea how to draw a good figure, but after the first life drawing session I realised just how much I loved to do this. Gradually, I found life drawing was not only a benefit to character concept work, but also benefits animal drawing, too. Now it has become a part of my life and I still enjoy doing it. I believe that life drawing helps us to see the beautiful curves of the human body and to see the beauty in our world. It also helps us to practice many different compositions in a short period of time. Since it helps us to see the

beautiful aspects in the world, it also helps all different kinds of visual art, including my concept work.

What examples do you feel are the best expressions of the beauty of the human form, and why?

I really like some of Peter Paul Rubens's drawings, Nicolai Fechin's drawings, and Rembrandt's paintings. They have totally mastered the perfect skills to draw and paint the beautiful human form. Their drawings have a really strong and powerful line quality, without wasting any strokes. Rembrandt's paintings demonstrate wonderful skin tones and beautiful colour variation.

Which artists, including any of the Old Masters such as Rembrandt and Rubens, would you say have influenced you the most?

Digital and Fantasy: Craig Mullins, Ryan Meinerding, Matthew Barrett and Scott Albaugh. Traditional Painting: Nicolai Fechin, Ingres, Gustav Klimt, Peter Paul Rubens, William Bouguerea, John Singer Sargent and Jereme Lipking.

What is it about the human figure and character design that captivates you the most?

Body curves and people. I have found that
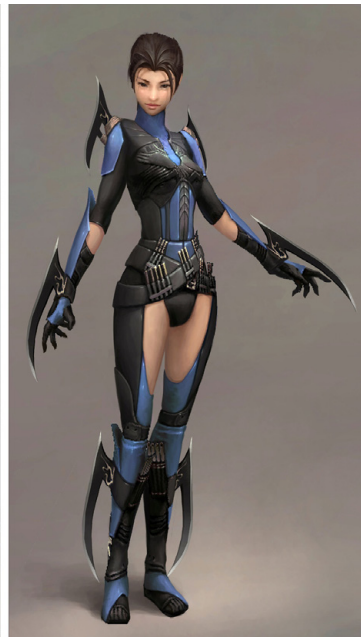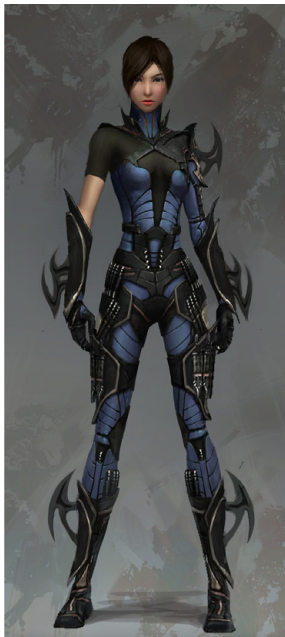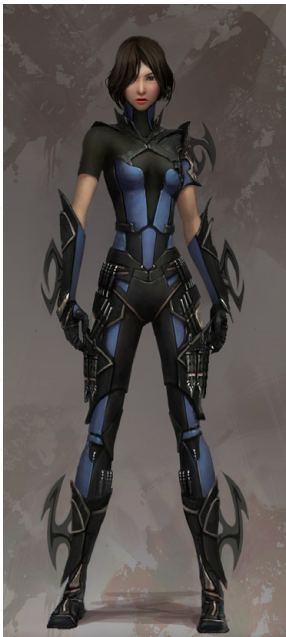
beautiful things can be very simple. There are many possible ways to draw a line, and if we do it right then just one line can be very beautiful. People are very fun subjects to observe and it is about characters.

Do you find the female form more interesting or are you impartial?

I believe both females and males are interesting to draw and I just want to explore this. Since most life drawing sessions hire female models, more often than not, I do not get many opportunities to draw good male models, and it does create an interest to want to draw the male form sometimes.

Regarding Guild Wars, there is a mixture of both concept sketches and 3D characters in your portfolio, so what was your role on the game specifically?

Character Artist. This is how they refer to us here. We design characters, make 3D models and do rigging. We also have five Concept Artists and they only do concept art.

What are the typical poly counts of the Guildwars's characters and the size and number of the texture maps used for each?

In Guild Wars One, we have around 2,000 to 2,500 triangles, and a 512 x 512 texture size for the characters. For some of very large sized creatures, we have two 512 x 512 textures, but the poly count remains around 2000 - 2500 triangles.

How do you find your digital concept work on the game, compared to your traditional painting?

For me, both mediums are cool. Sometimes I like to paint in Photoshop, and sometimes I like to do traditional oil painting. I believe digital

media is very cool to use. When compared to traditional media, say for commercial purposes, it totally rules, but there is something that cannot be achieved through digital painting, such as some of Rembrandt's paintings and some of the Old Masters' oil paintings.

Another reason why I still paint traditionally is because I like to actually to hold brushes and mix paint, physically. I also like to go outside and paint the landscape. With traditional media it is so much easier to do this.

Computers are a great tool when wanting to
learn new techniques, since we can view a lot
of paintings and photos at the same time and
decide what we can do next, or what we can
do to improve, and they include the Internet.
Traditional media is not easy to zoom in and
zoom out of quickly, so it takes longer to figure
out what the problem is.

And finally, what is your favourite period from art
history?
I will say I enjoy living in the 21st Century since
there are tonnes of possibilities and all different
kinds of ways to make art, and the computer is a
very fun tool to play with.

Jason (wei che) Juan

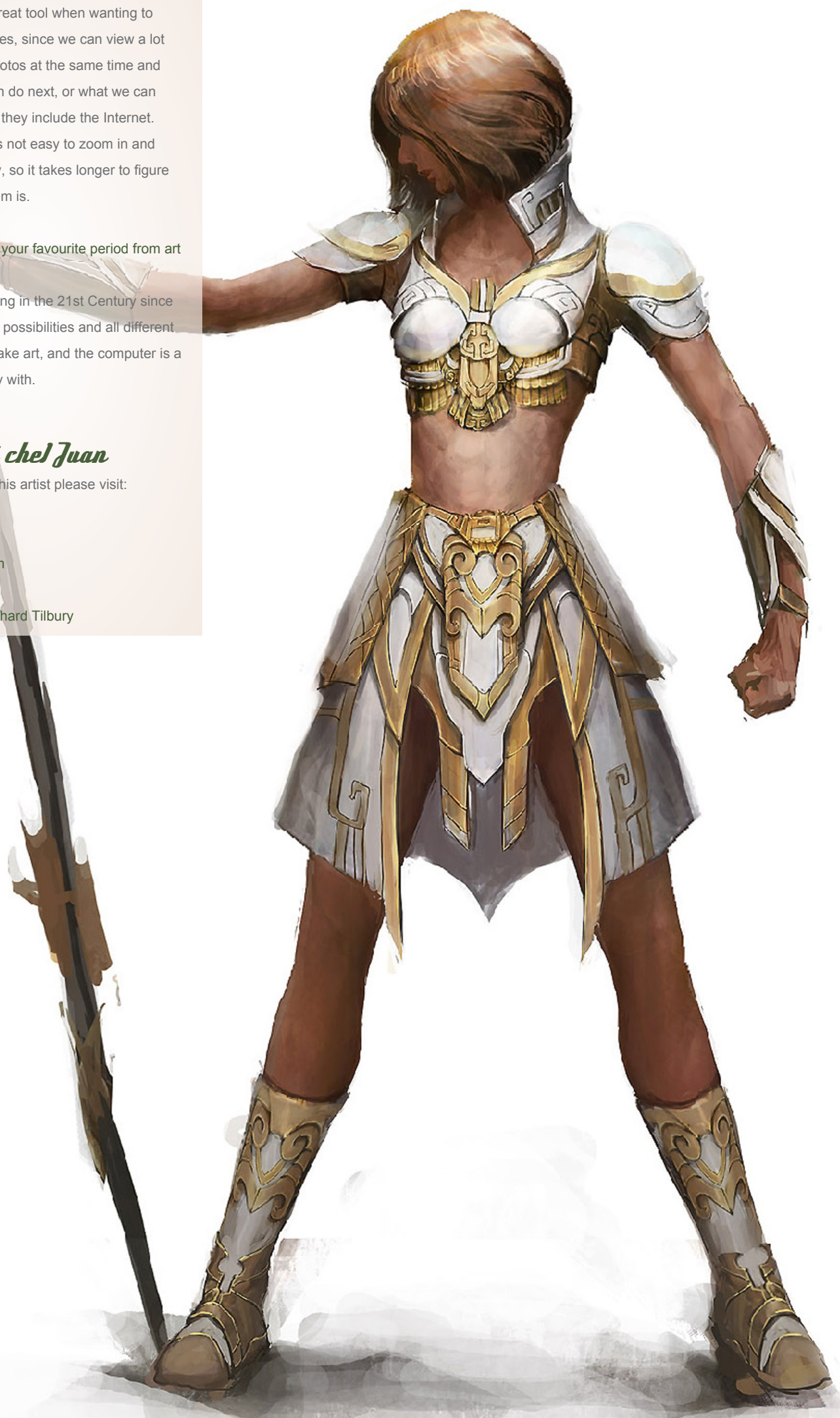For more work by this artist please visit:
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jasonj05@msn.com

Interviewed by: Richard Tilbury

KRZYSZTOF NOWAK

DIGITAL ART MASTERS:VOLUME 3
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

DIGITAL ART MASTERS
VOLUME 3

Following in the success of our first two books in the 'Digital Art Masters' series, we would like to announce the 'Call for Entries' for the third book in the series 'Digital Art Masters: Volume 3'.

'Volume 1 & 2' of 3DTotal's book series, featured some of the best 3d & 2d artwork from such artists as Marek Denco, James Busby , Natascha Roeoesli, Philip Straub, Rob Chang, Jonny Duddle, Benita Winckler, Ryan Lim and Fred Bastide. The one thing that set the 'Digital Art Masters' series apart from other gallery/catalogue books was the fact that we wanted to show the readers how the images were created, so each artist wrote a breakdown overview to accompany their piece in the book.

'Digital Art Masters: Volume 3' will again be showcasing some of the finest 2d and 3d images from talented artists across the globe. Initial submissions need to be of your final image only to enable entrance into the selection process. Chosen artists then need to supply an additional text overview with 'making of' and 'work in progress' images. See samples at bottom of page to give you a good idea of what is required.

Schedule and Calendar for all submissions is availble from this web link:

http://www.3dtotal.com/damv3_callforsubmissions/

ANTHONY GUEBELS

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NICOLAS LESAFFRE

"I remember the day I saw
for the first time a digital
concept art... I realised the
possibilities which were
offered to us by manipulating
digital painting software..."

MORGAN YON

Morgan Yon has been working professionally as
a concept artist for just two years now, although
from the work you're about to witness on the
following pages you may not have guessed that
he'd been working professionally for such a
short time! In the time that we've been speaking
with Morgan, he's been updating us regularly
with his latest works - sometimes even daily!
We have never once failed to be impressed by
his talents. Not once! So read on to find out
how, and why, Morgan creates the fantastic
imagery that we find in his portfolio today…

MORGAN YON

Hello Morgan, thanks for taking time away from your canvas to chat with us. Can you briefly give us a little insight into your background as an artist, and how it all started for you?

First of all, thank you for allowing me to share my experience as a concept artist, and furthermore for explaining the way I capture the environment in which I have been for almost two years. As far as I am concerned, my debut to the art world was similar to many of us, for I began drawing very early - I would say from the age of 3 - and have never stopped since. My grandfather was an oil painter and my mother an architect, and I believe I have inherited their artistic genes. I went into artistic studies from the end of secondary school, where I followed an illustration training course in an art school in the city of Lyon, in France. These four years of studies were, for me, the true beginning of my artistic learning, when I was able to practice subjects such as sculpture, anatomy, illustration, animation and traditional painting. Every year reinforced in me the idea that I had really found my way.

Then, the young provincial that I was, I went to the capital and I made my first steps in February 2006 at Quantic Dream Studio as a character designer, where I was able to build on what I had learned at school and discover the world of digital illustration. By going through art books, websites and forums, I realised that the world into which I had just stepped was going to teach me a great deal of things, make me discover an incredible number of talents, and be an endless source of inspiration. Working every day, side by side, with talented artists, combined with the emulation that this team creates, generates a ceaseless motivation and a constant urge to progress.
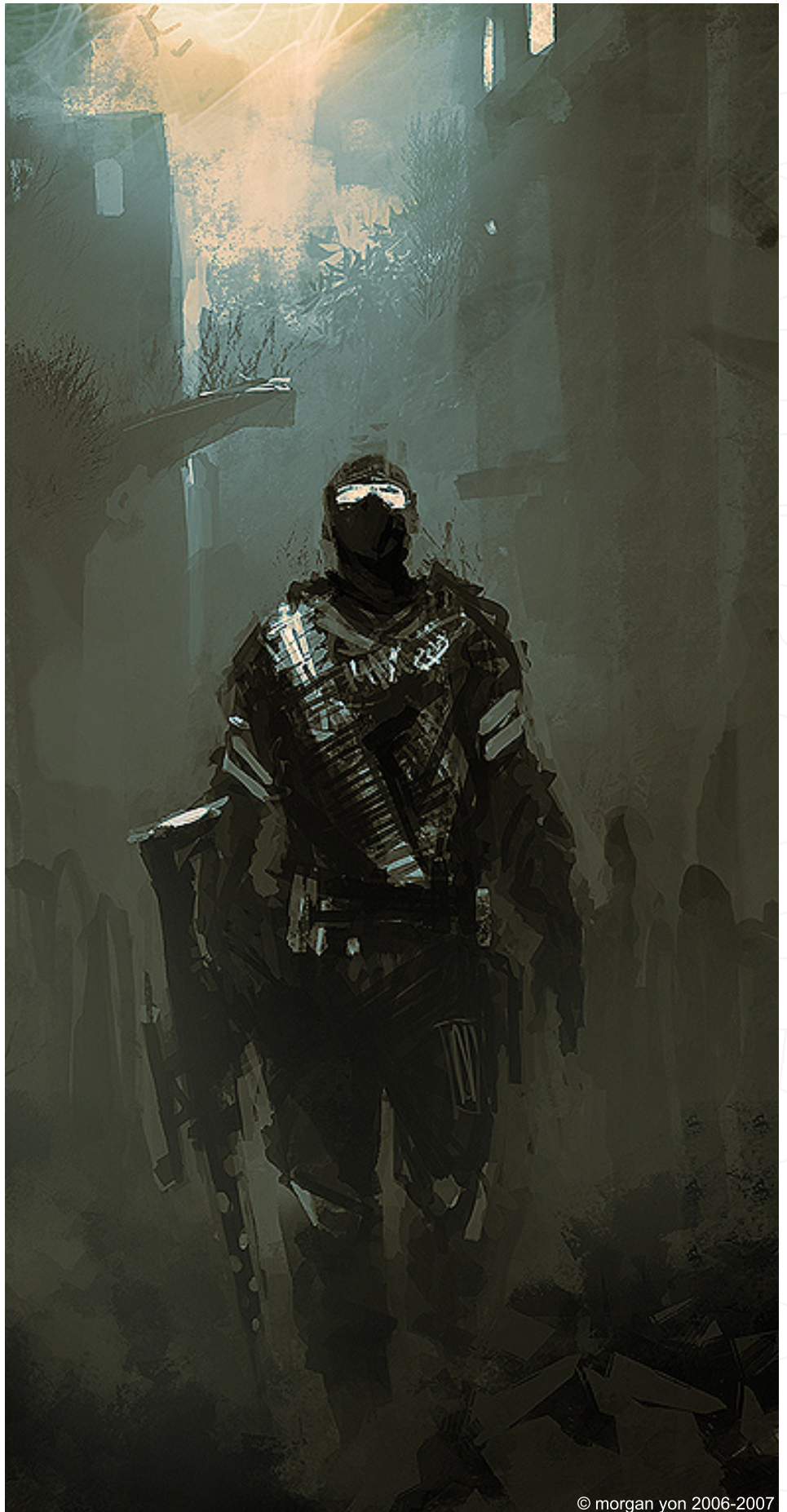
You said you explored sculpture, anatomy, illustration and so on at art school, so how applicable is this knowledge and these skills to your present day digital work?

I believe the knowledge of perspective and anatomy has been the most important and the most constructive part in my learning process. Indeed, everything is useful and present in the illustrations I create today. Anatomy enables me to be as coherent as possible in the creation of characters, and thus it becomes a necessary basis in my cartoon style, for instance. Therefore, and thanks to perspective's notions, I can stage these characters and create the images I have in mind. Sculpture was a good way to learn 3D and shapes in space. I believe there is no better way to understand anatomy than by doing sculpture.

During my first school years, we learned, over and over again, how to draw and erase the draftsman's tricks, which we had through working the academic drawing. Afterwards, the programme approached problems of storytelling, framing, colour and so on. It is like a complete formatting of our past as a draftsman, and a new foundation. However, it becomes harder not to be seduced by the digital tools we have to avoid those constraints. 3D modelling removes any problem of perspective, and digital painting allows us to begin over and over again

at will, which is why I try from time to time to keep the drawing basis I have whilst sketching. My studies gave me a basic experience and my drawing abilities, which grow day after day through training by feeding off all the images which I see everyday. That's what I find so exciting in this profession: its constant and never-ending questioning.

Looking at your portfolio examples of your latest works, vast landscapes seem to be a recurring theme, within which we often find single characters swamped by their surroundings. I get feelings of loneliness and isolation from these images. Is this something that you wanted to convey, and if so what are your reasons for this type of imagery combining man and nature? I have always had huge difficulties in approaching sets, and this lack of experience quickly caught up on me. Then I began uncountable tests of forms, perspective and scale, quickly executed in Photoshop. Being more and more familiar with digital tools, I also discovered 3D where I was able to quickly set up perspectives and rid me from these constraints which somehow hampered me. My latest works result from these tests, in which I stage characters almost eaten by their environments. It is always, for me, a true challenge to imagine spaces where the viewer can feel the gigantic sizes, and be intrigued and unhinged by them. I also enjoy

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challenging my characters; confronting them with their environment and trying to let the viewer imagine his own story stemming from the place and characters I have designed.

I have also been very inspired by video games, in particular "Shadow of the Colossus", which to me is a true artistic masterpiece where designers have been able to play with scale to create incredible scenes. Cinema is also a strong influence for my latest works; I find in epic scenes a poetic connotation which I like trying to transcribe in my illustrations.

What were the "difficulties" that you faced when first approaching landscapes?

Sets are for me a true challenge. Bringing to light a scene in order to better convey the feelings that we want to, is a truly hard test for me. As I said before: perspective, and each problem which derives from it, puts me under pressure because the errors which we can commit are visible and it is a work which demands a lot of attention and time.

On a few occasions, I did not take the time to think about which way the scene should be lit. I thus focused on details and told myself that the light

would come afterwards. When I was almost finished with my picture, I tried to catch up with the light as best I could by tinkering with things from right to left. Huge mistake! Since then, I have tried to make this work at first-hand. I define my light source in the first step and try to keep that constantly in mind. Details are also things which seem important to me in order to create images as well as possible. To keep a global coherence in a picture is very difficult, and to captivate the reader on the foreseen elements is another one.

In my case, interior sets are delicate to do because light is very important; the way it is put in, the way objects interact with it, what it connotes, etc... For all of these questions I have to find answers in the starting process. On the other hand, exterior sets have other difficulties. Light is very important too, but so is the colour scheme and the way these colours match. Even there, the pictorial food of images and references is, in my opinion, truly necessary to approach this kind of decoration and challenge. But there is no secret: the more we practice, the more the automatisms build themselves up, and questions find their answers.

I'm quite taken with your interesting use of composition and the framing of your artworks. We can often find images which have been tilted slightly, making the work slightly unnerving/disorientating. Do you like to test your audiences? What sorts of influences from the past have found their way into the challenging imagery that you create today? You are right with the unnerving sensation I wanted to convey. I am also very interested in comic strips - the poor man's cinema, as the saying goes - where the framing should emphasise the subjects. In my latest works, the slightly tilted framings strengthen my intentions to unhinge the viewer. I try to put these ideas into the image using what I learned about framing when I was at school. I also try to stimulate the viewers' reactions towards the subject and their feelings by looking at my image. I use a straight framing to connote quietness, and create unease by tilting the frame. Everything depends on the subject and the message I want to convey.

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When I was 14, I went on a school trip to 1944's landing beaches in Normandy. This experience was one of the most striking of my life. I still have a vivid memory of it and I try today, with the tools which are handy, to make the viewer feel what I saw and felt. I remember in particular the Arromanches's sea-cliffs. I found myself at the bottom of these sea-cliffs, overwhelmed by their greatness; a place that carries so much suffering and sacrifice, and I will always remember these strange and intense sensations of isolation, weakness and intoxication, all of which held in a freaky, cold silence. This period of history became a recurring subject in my paintings, for it interests me a lot and it therefore took a natural place in my work.
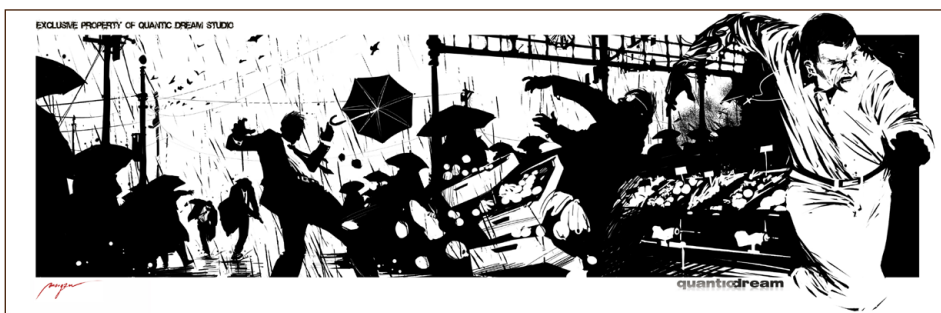
Wow, that sounds like such a unique experience! I am so pleased that, as an artist, you are trying to convey those feelings to the rest of the world through your work, long after the time. Would you say that your strongest inspiration comes from personal experience? Or can you find equally as much inspiration looking through books, websites and so on?

It is true that I am more satisfied by the pictures which were inspired by what I lived or by what I felt. I try to put a little piece of me into those works and finally I think that it shows. Also I am not that fond of reading, but I try now to plunge myself into books to imagine other universes and to build my own stories. Forums and websites are also a big source of inspiration, but it's more difficult to imagine other universes than those we have seen. Indeed, images shown on the Internet have already been thought and imagined by the author. If I come across a picture which I like very much, my first feeling is, "wow, I want to do this too", but I have the sensation of something that does not belong to me. When I look at the images of other artists, I generally keep in mind a piece of information concerning an interesting framing for example, or a link between shape and colour scheme. I thus try to store up information and use it in my personal images. I think it is necessary to make the difference between taking ideas which belong to the artist and use what they offer to us to create a personal, new one. I definitely try to have the latter approach.

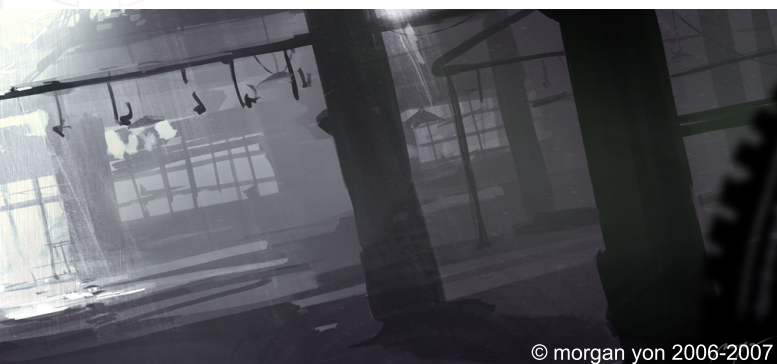exclusive property of quantic dream studio
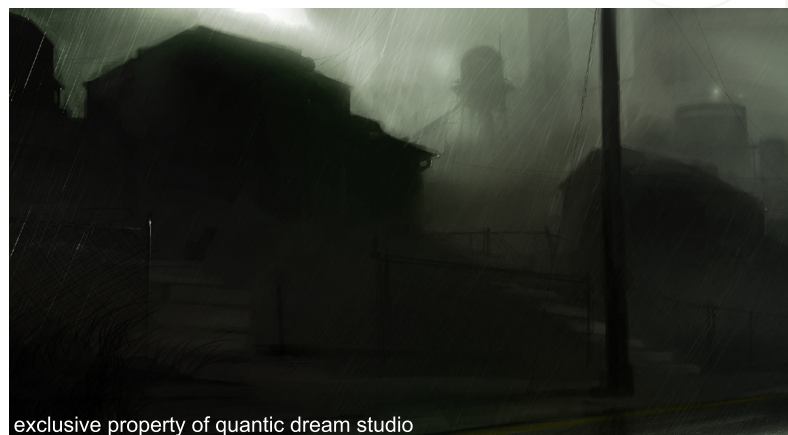
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I would thus say that the experiences which I have lived are indeed the basis of a more accomplished work, where I give more energy and passion. Nevertheless, ideas and feelings that other artists share with us through their illustrations are also an evident source of inspiration in my work. What I have learned by looking at the work of others is that the technique matters less than messages and ideas which they want to convey. Now if, on top of that, one has faultless technique, it cannot but command my admiration.

Your mark making is truly beautiful, Morgan. A fine example of your painting skills I believe can be found in the piece titled, 'Devil's Beauty' (above) – a monochrome image which displays wonderful brush work that brings the image to life. Can you share with us any secrets about how you go about your paintings and the kinds of brushes you employ?

This illustration is a part of a couple of images created for a future comic strip's project based on real facts from WW2. My main direction was above all the atmosphere. I wanted it to be awfully cold and hostile. How would you feel if you were left deep inside a Byelorussian forest with the sound of a whole bunch of tanks and infantry hot on your heels? The monochrome range was unavoidable, and I wanted the picture being read step by step. We discover the place, characters, and finally the tank. I
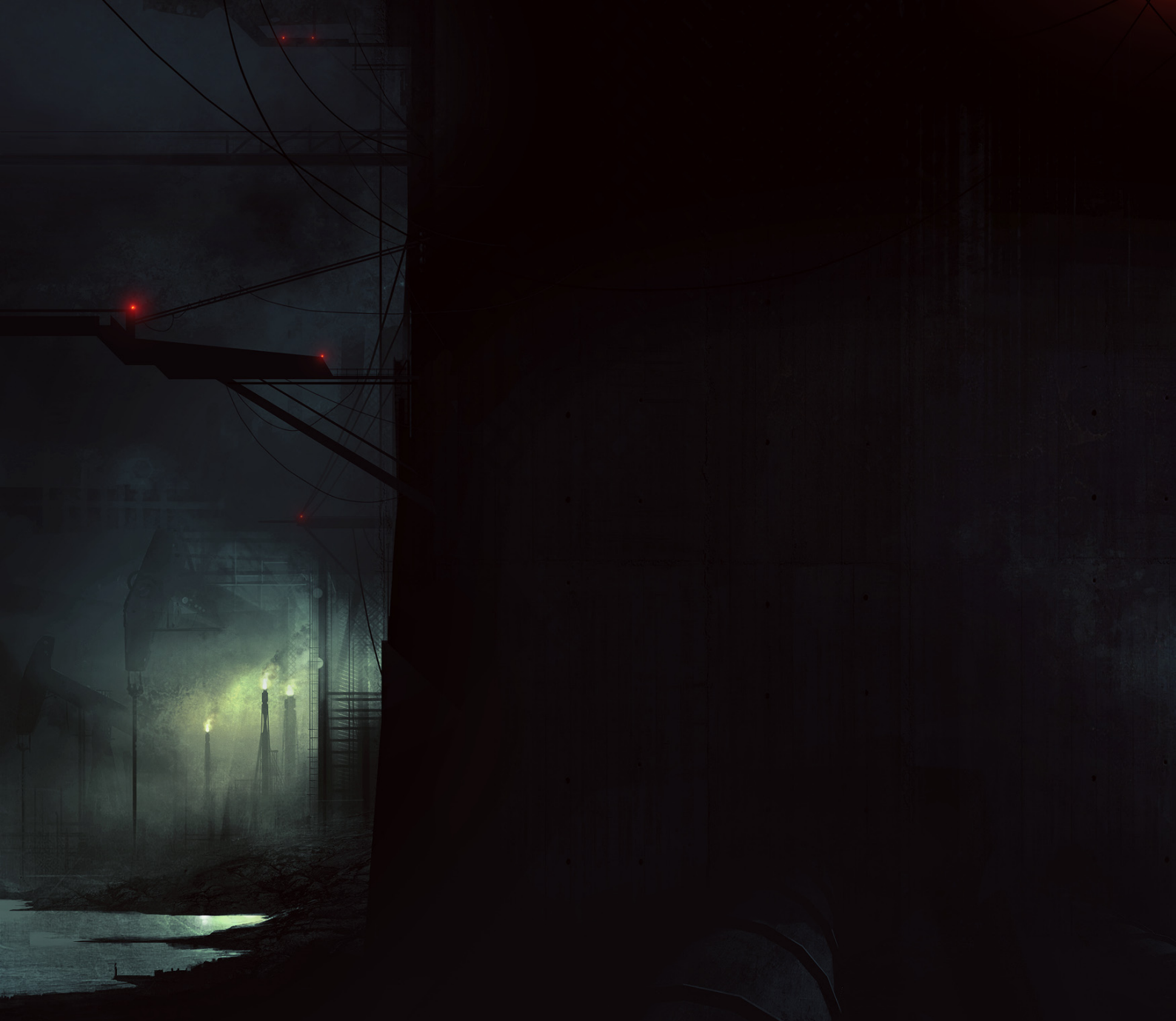
also helped the viewer to go through the image thanks to the silhouette of the forest, which is a complete part in this dynamic. The closer we get to the right-hand side of the image, the darker and more impressive the masses get – the effect being similar to a wave which breaks out. "The Devil comes down."

Once this composition was found, I began working on details, relying on picture references. For the forest, I did not want to use photographs over which I should have to paint, and so I used some parts of photos to turn them into tree brushes, allowing me a total control in their rhythm. To create the moody and snow-covered ground, I used a large number of dirt brushes by trying to obtain something coherent in their forms and spaces. The characters were handled with basic Photoshop brushes, and the snow is a succession of white point motion blurred. To bring the stage to life, I tried to have a painterly approach by suggesting things rather
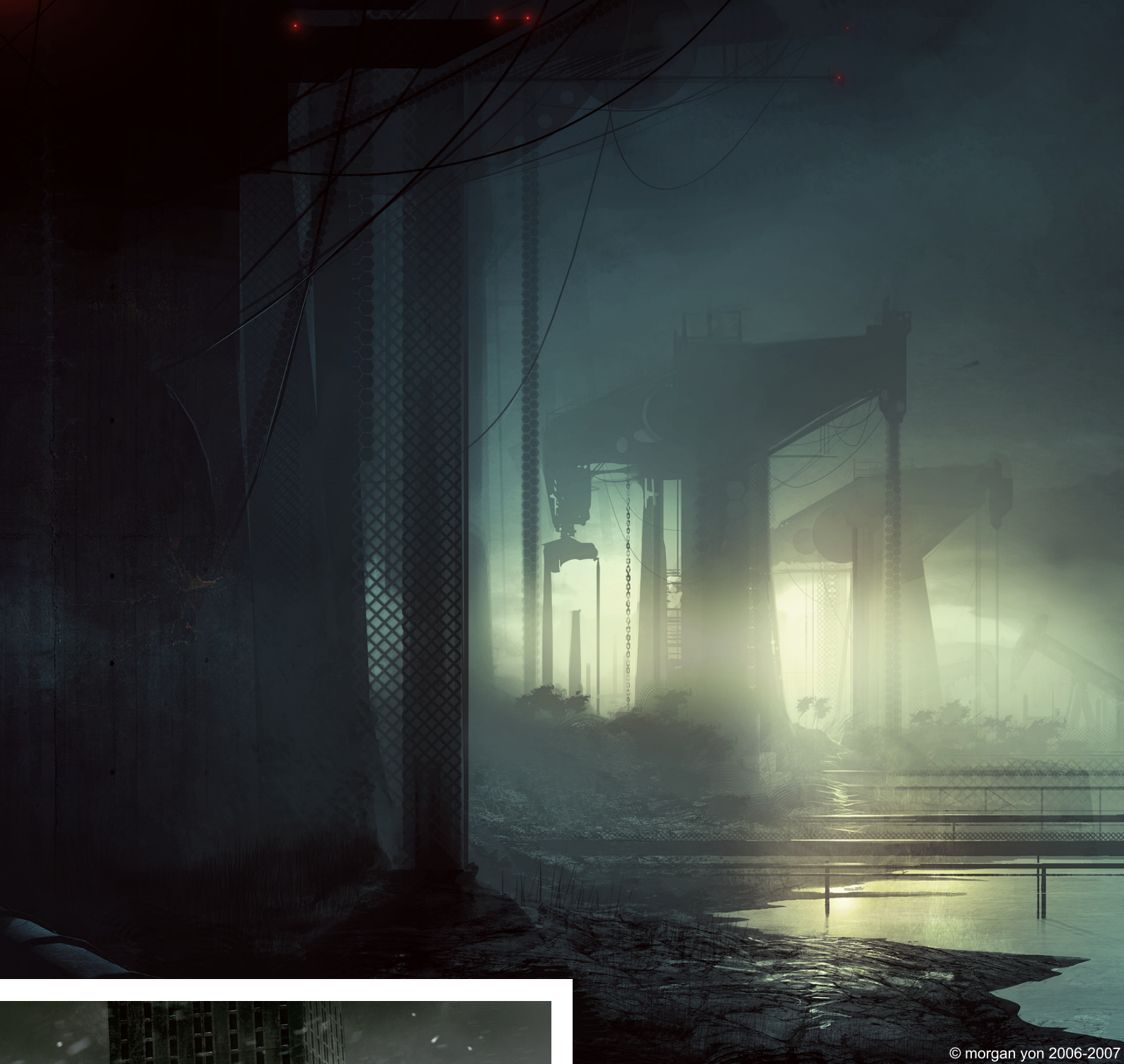
than highly detailing them, even though it is sometimes difficult to restrain myself. Through the design of this picture, I have been more focused on the creation of custom brushes, which saves me extra time and enables me to reach unexpected, yet interesting, results.

It sounds like you actually put yourself right in the centre of your paintings. Do you think this is your 'key' to achieving such potent imagery? Does painting in such a way ever make you quite emotional; for example, do you feel the pain or the isolation that your paintings are emulating whilst you are working on them?

Maybe so. As I said before, staging myself often gives birth to new feelings which I try to write down. It reminds me of the moments when I play video games; for example, I sometimes literally bend to avoid bullets when I play first person shooter games! I think that I sometimes have the same reactions when I work on a picture. I do not say that I lie on the

ground to avoid the tank in Devil's Beauty (because I think people would take me for a madman), but I have at least tried to place myself inside the skin of a man who would be there and to try to feel his fear and his emotions. In a slightly less serious way, I also take the expressions of the characters I work on, make a face, and subconsciously I also put myself in the skin of the characters that I design.

When I think again about it, it must be downright hilarious to see me that way, but this is maybe the key to achieving the pictures that I have in mind. Everything is based on the relationship that I want to establish with the viewer, and to achieve it, it's perhaps necessary to live as the subject.

I've noticed that your images often involve subjects towards the edges of your canvases finding themselves in darkness, whilst the light focuses in on the important elements and the action of the pieces. This, to me, is reminiscent of classical paintings. Where do you source your inspiration from, and which artists - past or present - are your greatest influences?
The scenes which I represent usually consist of a set with a main light source. I like working with dark atmospheres; I indeed try to focus on the light so that I leave the rest in darkness. I spent a lot of time working on thriller comic strips where the blacks best serve the subject, and since then I have kept these automatisms in some of my paintings. I am also inspired by many things which I have seen everywhere, but some paintings speak more to me than others. Among them, Masters like Diego Velasquez, Rembrandt, Gustave Courbet, and also artists less known
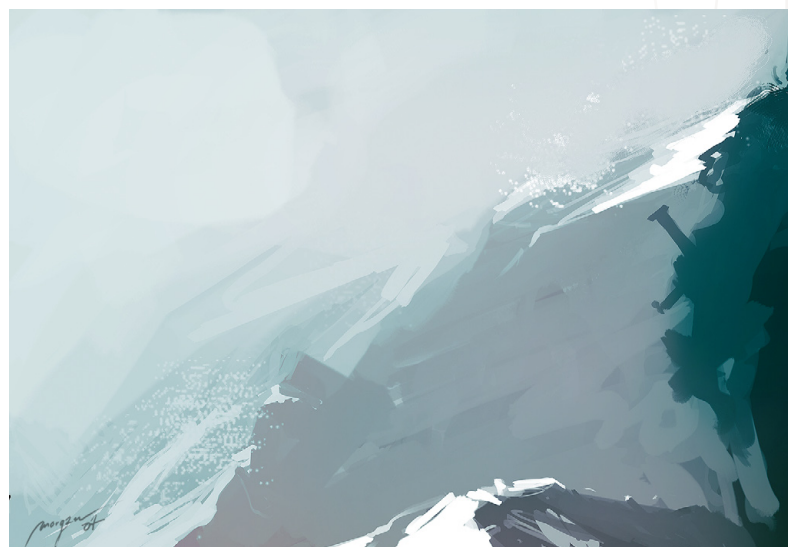
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such as Leon Augustin Lhermitte, are part of the visual references which I often use.

However, having known the digital world of illustration for only two years, I have mostly found my visual inspiration from the incredible number of recent artists which I have encountered here and there during my long visits online. I remember the day I saw for the first time a digital concept art, "The Beach", by Thierry Doizon. Downright nailed on my seat, I realised the possibilities which were offered to us by manipulating digital painting software. Nicolas Bouvier's artworks leave me literally speechless, for he has an awesome sense of scale and shapes, without speaking about the poetry of his images.

So, artists like Craig Mullins of course, Daniel Dociu, Mathias Verhasselt, The Black Frog, Feerik, Marko Djurdjevic, and countless others, are names which I often double-click on and I learn a lot by looking at their art. Recently, I fell on the incredible work of Thomas Pringle, who single-handedly matches everything I like in illustration. Thanks to the Internet for that!

Finally, in the comic strip world, which I like as much as concept art, the books which we owe to Bernie Wrightson, Alberto Breccia, Guarnido, Claire Wendling, Virginie Augustin and Thomas Von Kummant are part of those which seldom remain on the shelves of my library.

You've mentioned comic strips a fair few times throughout this interview, so what is it about comics that inspire you so greatly, and how does this inspiration transfer to your more painterly digital artworks?

A comic strip is the media which I knew first of all at school, and for which I had at once a huge interest. It was the first time I met professionals because we had professors already known in the comic strip industry. It was, for me, one of the most interesting classes because I really understood that a comic strip is a true relationship between the artist and the reader. You have a story to tell and there are codes to follow, as in the movies, in order to make the reader feel what you have in mind. A comic strip is, according to me, a true science of storytelling. Line art and colour are also stages of storytelling. The result is more than clear to the reader, and you learn your errors very quickly.

The link between text and images is essential; the way your eyes go through the pictures has to be as clear as possible, which represents a whole lot of work beforehand. I consider comic strips as real, personal commitment in the duration: a true adventure. I find in every frame

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of comic strips an illustration; the framing is meant to say something to the reader and the drawing also serves the subject. It is maybe the reason why I try to involve it in the illustrations I create today. I am also much more attracted to the boards coming from either graphic novels or authors' books. Perfect inkings/unblemished outlines speak less to me than one simple line art or a direct colour work. I feel the intentions of the author in this kind of work much more. I thus take these things which are appropriate for the comic strip and try to use them in my illustrations. Having no personal graphic style in comic strips (although it is something on which I'm working), I use the knowledge I have as a basic starting point in illustration.

Your character work is quite interesting in contrast to your landscape paintings; they can be either highly stylised, or highly detailed and realistic looking. Which method do you prefer, given the choice, and why?

I would say that I have no preference. It's just that realistic drawing represents for me a technical challenge, whereas cartoon is a real relaxation. For instance, I like working with attention on the modelling of the faces: it is a thing in which an artist can easily be restricted to his own tricks, and thus it requires a constant return on foundations, anatomy and analysis of bodies and movements.

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To succeed in making characters understandable, as precisely as possible, the expressions, anatomical specificity, clothing details and body language is a really interesting challenge. Instead, cartoon style allows us to have complete freedom. Stylising a character, finding other forms, being more nervous in the line art and letting your pen go on the sheet, is something incredibly fun… I particularly like working on general forms, being mostly more satisfied with my preparatory sketches, rather than the finalised one.

I find you choice of canvas sizes very interesting: some of your works are panoramic, others find themselves as tall, thin canvases. What decides on the size of your canvas when you start a painting? Or do you find that your canvas size is constantly changing whilst you work on a piece? What decisions do you make when framing your paintings to keep the viewer excited by your subject matter?

I generally have no precise idea of the format I will work on when I decide to make an illustration. My personal works are often born after I have seen an interesting photo or movie. So, I have a very first idea which comes to me, and I put it very quickly on the sheet. Then, although it may not be the best way to go, I often re-size my images to keep focus on what I want to convey. I often start on a vertical format which will be finally a wide panoramic. However, if the subject strongly fits itself (in particular when characters are high-angle framed, allowing me to express the idea of a person swamped by his/her environment), my format remains constant throughout the process of creation. But generally, and my pictures don't contradict me, I work set designs in horizontal format, and for more intimate subjects I try to work them in a less conventional format.

However, there is a media in which I force myself to define beforehand my frames: comic strips. To keep the viewer excited by the subject I'm working on, I try to create the path that the eye will follow during the first visualisation of the image. I think it is a truly important part in the preliminary study, and
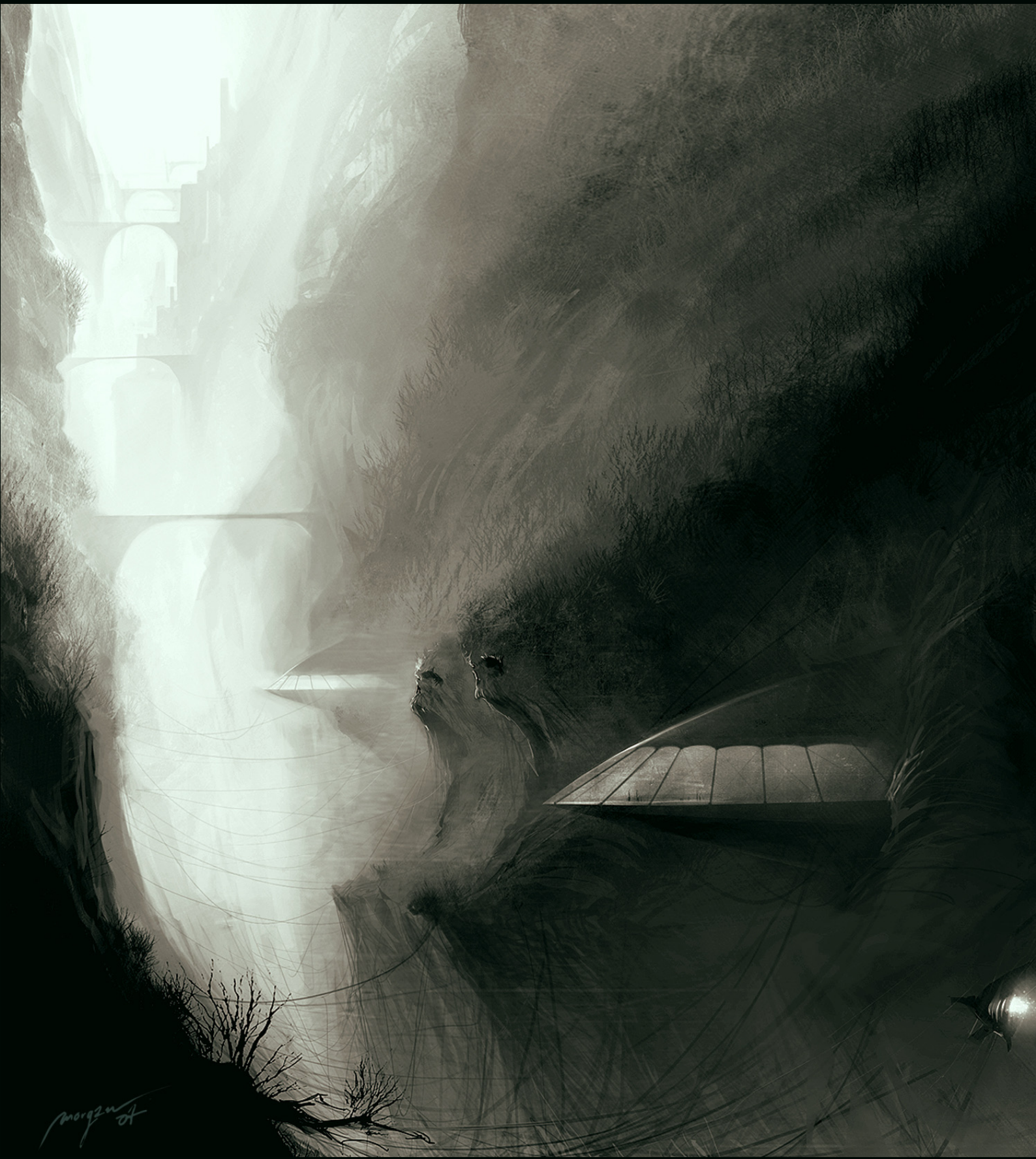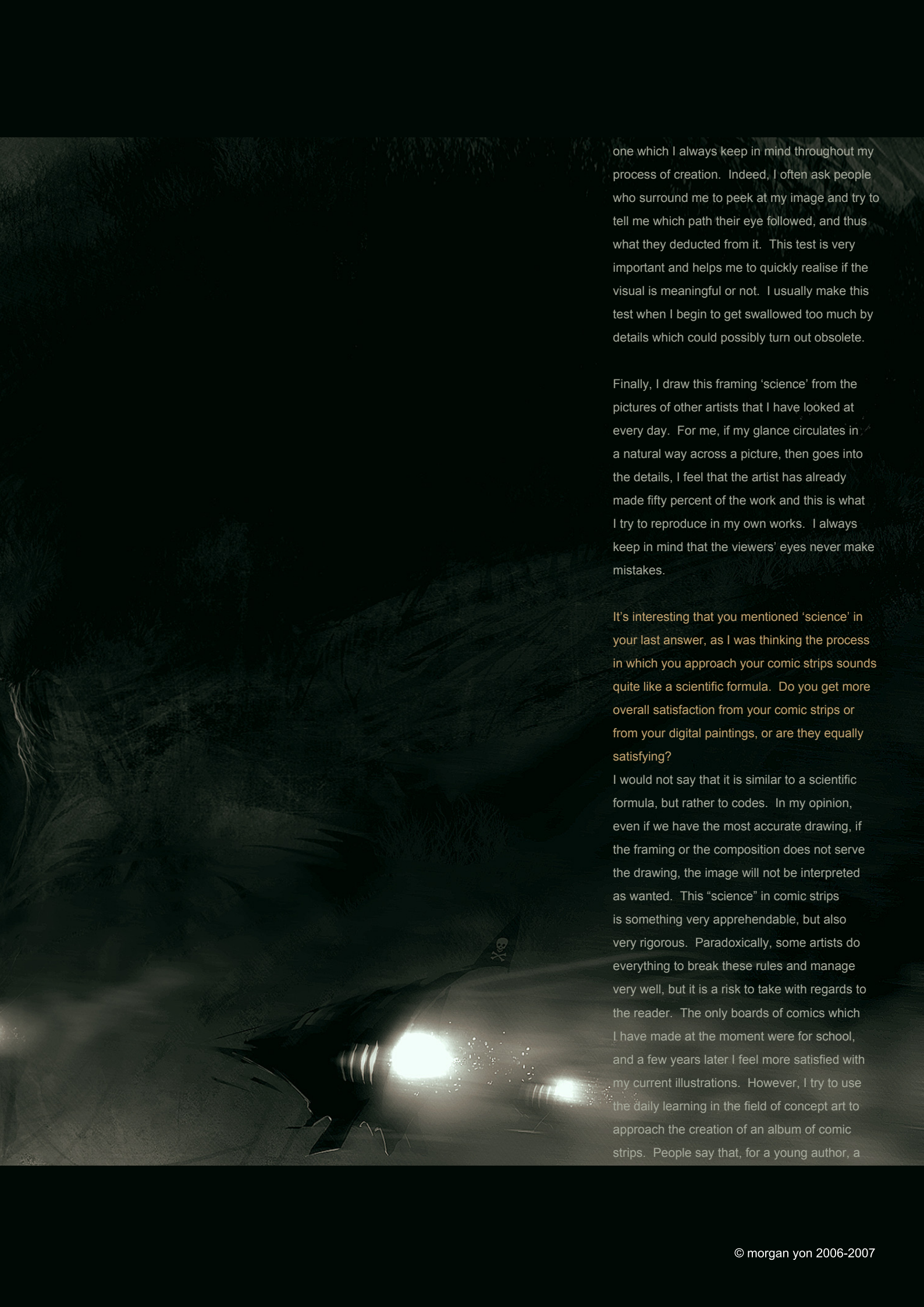
one which I always keep in mind throughout my process of creation. Indeed, I often ask people who surround me to peek at my image and try to tell me which path their eye followed, and thus what they deducted from it. This test is very important and helps me to quickly realise if the visual is meaningful or not. I usually make this test when I begin to get swallowed too much by details which could possibly turn out obsolete.

Finally, I draw this framing 'science' from the pictures of other artists that I have looked at every day. For me, if my glance circulates in a natural way across a picture, then goes into the details, I feel that the artist has already made fifty percent of the work and this is what I try to reproduce in my own works. I always keep in mind that the viewers' eyes never make mistakes.

It's interesting that you mentioned 'science' in your last answer, as I was thinking the process in which you approach your comic strips sounds quite like a scientific formula. Do you get more overall satisfaction from your comic strips or from your digital paintings, or are they equally satisfying?

I would not say that it is similar to a scientific formula, but rather to codes. In my opinion, even if we have the most accurate drawing, if the framing or the composition does not serve the drawing, the image will not be interpreted as wanted. This "science" in comic strips is something very apprehendable, but also very rigorous. Paradoxically, some artists do everything to break these rules and manage very well, but it is a risk to take with regards to the reader. The only boards of comics which I have made at the moment were for school, and a few years later I feel more satisfied with my current illustrations. However, I try to use the daily learning in the field of concept art to approach the creation of an album of comic strips. People say that, for a young author, a

first album is never anticipated, but a first draft can very quickly create a good or bad reputation. It is thus a question of taking time and being sure to have in hand the elements which allow approaching a project in a serene way. Making an album - just one - has been a true dream since I was a young boy, so you can imagine what satisfaction I shall have when it happens, or when I put the last brush stroke to the last frame...

I thought it would be nice to end on some information about what projects you're currently working on and what we can expect to see from you in the future, so please can you tell us a little about what you're up to and how we can follow your future endeavours?

Professionally, I have worked for two years now at Quantic Dream studio in Paris as a concept designer on a next PS3 video game project, in partnership with Sony. I worked on the pre-production and was joined one year ago by other talented designers who have taught me a lot and caused the emulation that I hope to find in a company. The game is a psychological thriller, in a near future, with a movie approach proper to the company and its ideas.

I also work from time to time for advertising companies, as a roughman/ illustrator. I also have a project which holds me dear: I have collaborated for two years now with M. Dufranne, the scriptwriter of a comic strip in the creation of a one shot comic strip dealing with real facts from the Second World War. An album centred on the idea of tolerance and the limits it creates; all this in the heavy atmosphere of the last Century's beginning. It has been almost one year since we considered this project, but time and energy is still taken from me to finalise it in good conditions. At the moment I'm making some preparatory illustrations and I hope I can really be more committed as quickly as possible in this adventure.

Finally, and this is a urge which I have had also for a long time now, I would like to pursue my knowledge for a few more years in the field of the concept art, and why not also go on to see what happens over the other side of the pond soon? The future will tell.

It has been a pleasure speaking to you, and I wish you all the very best of luck for the future. Keep in touch!

Thank you for the interest you have put into my work and me. Of course, we will keep in touch!

Morgan Yon

For more work by this artist please visit:

http://www.morgan-yon.com

Or contact them at:

morgan.yon@gmail.com

Interviewed by: Lynette Clee

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"Failure is a natural part of learning and it's only an obstacle if you can't see past it. Set yourself a clear goal. You'll worry much more about failing if you're aimlessly trying to come up with stuff..."

LUIS MELO

Freelance artist Luis Melo chats to us about how he first started out doing illustrations and what inspires him to paint..

LUIS MELO

Hi Luis, thanks for talking to us. What first got you into the world of 2D digital art?

Hi! Well, I always enjoyed drawing, and I was always fascinated with working on the computer. As a kid, I used to draw silly comics, and as soon as I found out about 3D software (back in the days of 3D Studio 3), I wanted to do art on the PC. But by the end of high school, I was a bit aimless. Not really knowing what to do with my passion for drawing, and without much of an academic choice at that time in Portugal, I took a course in Graphic Design at the school of fine arts.

In the first 2 years I almost stopped drawing (yeah, the drawing teachers there kind of did that to you), and it was around the third year there that I finally did some doodles for fun again, and then I found out about the universe of online digital art communities. I wish I'd found it sooner. That's when I decided I wanted to be

an illustrator. I'd say I learned like 80% of what I know from the Internet, talking to other artists and looking at pictures. I can't express how motivating and addicting this process was so far, and I feel like I've just started. I also made great friends this way.

Where do you currently work?

Currently, I'm working as a freelancer. Until recently I was Art Director at a local game development company, called Ignite Games.

We were first drawn to your work because of your illustrative/painterly style mix. How did your style develop?

I tried not to stick to a style, because there was so much I liked to do… I was first fascinated by concept art, and skilful speed painting. Sparth and Craig Mullins, for example, simply blew my mind. Such strong impressions with so few strokes. I tried to replicate the stuff they did, never really being able to, but learning immensely in the process. I also love animation (namely, Japanese animation) backdrops, which are done with a more traditional approach and a different kind of attention to detail. Although

they can be very realistic, the traditional craft behind them is incredibly simple and straight to the point. And they always have to convey mood, which is what I value the most, so I studied this kind of art closely.

And finally, my experience in graphic design helps me jump out of the previous styles I mentioned, and do more free and graphical stuff. My personal stuff floats between these fields, and I'm happy to stick with them for now. I pick ingredients from each that I think are the most appropriate to convey what I want to say. Also, professionally, I can't decide on one 2D style to specialise in. So, I'll keep exploring several. I feel I have a long way to go in all of them, though.

How long do you generally spend on a painting? (I only ask this because you say that, "I can snap out of a pic's mood as quickly as I got in", on your website.)
He he, they usually take me from 8 to around 20 hours, for personal work. It's hard to tell because my attention span is like that of a baby chimp and I multi-task a lot. But yes, at around 20 hours into a picture, I start to have a hard time deciding what's being overdone, and more often than not work done after that time ends up spoiling the picture instead of helping. That's also more or less the time it takes for me to get tired of the subject matter, and yeah, then I "snap out" of the picture's mood. I'd say, if the picture isn't beautiful in 20-22 hours, then it never will be.

You are heavily into your music. To what extent does music play a part in your inspirations?
I'm heavily into my music, yes, but they're usually two separate passions when it comes to artistic production. I don't normally listen to the kind of music I play (Latin music) when I'm painting, because most of it is too upbeat - it makes me want to just get up and dance, and also because I like to focus on it to enjoy it. It's demanding stuff to listen to! I don't like to see music merely as a soundtrack for when

I'm working... Unless it's a poster for my band. But sometimes I do get inspired by certain tracks for the imagery of my pictures, either because they are scary or melancholic, or because they just show me something or take me somewhere. They can help me get into that painting trance, and I believe they contribute greatly to the final result.

You have a very wide range of subjects for your pictures, including yourself, friends, family, imaginary characters and caricatures, as well as a range of environments and landscapes. If you were 'let loose', what would you choose to paint more often?

I don't know, my interests shift from time to time. Sometimes I'm into pulp imagery, sometimes noir stuff… but for my personal work I've been increasingly interested in subjects with a human side, and in conveying

feelings. I don't do many close-up character pictures because I don't feel too comfortable about my figure drawing, yet. But even in the landscapes that make up the most significant part of my recent work, I try to focus on simple things that are involving. Maybe that's because I get to do all the more playful and fantastic stuff professionally. I'm less driven to simply entertain when I'm working on my own. So, I think you can expect some more urban landscapes and everyday scenes soon. I have some more ideas to put down.

Do you have any advice for aspiring artists and conga players?
Ha ha, it's funny you put artists and conga players together, because I often think of the two in parallel. I'm self-taught in both activities, and my general advice for both is the same. First of all, don't waste time, just

do it! We're all lazy. But if you like drawing, or playing music, the more you can dodge that laziness, the more addicted you'll get. Second of all, don't get discouraged. Failure is a natural part of learning and it's only an obstacle if you can't see past it. Get yourself a clear goal. You'll worry much more about failing if you're aimlessly trying to come up with stuff. Whether it's a painting or a killer solo, you need a reference, a model, something to look up to and keep your horizon bright.

Get your foundations right. This has a lot to do with having a goal, but in a technical way. Know what you need to improve: figure drawing, drum strokes or whatever. Just look at your heroes' work, look at yours, see what you need to improve, and get on it! Internet is free knowledge - it's all there! Don't get discouraged if the path seems too long. What does it matter how long it takes when it's fun? Finally, don't be afraid to show your stuff and get criticism. There are many communities for all levels of expertise, and you can get honest, useful crits from people that can really help you. But take a good dose of subjectivity with each crit. I've seen people react badly to constructive criticism because they're too uptight and insecure about
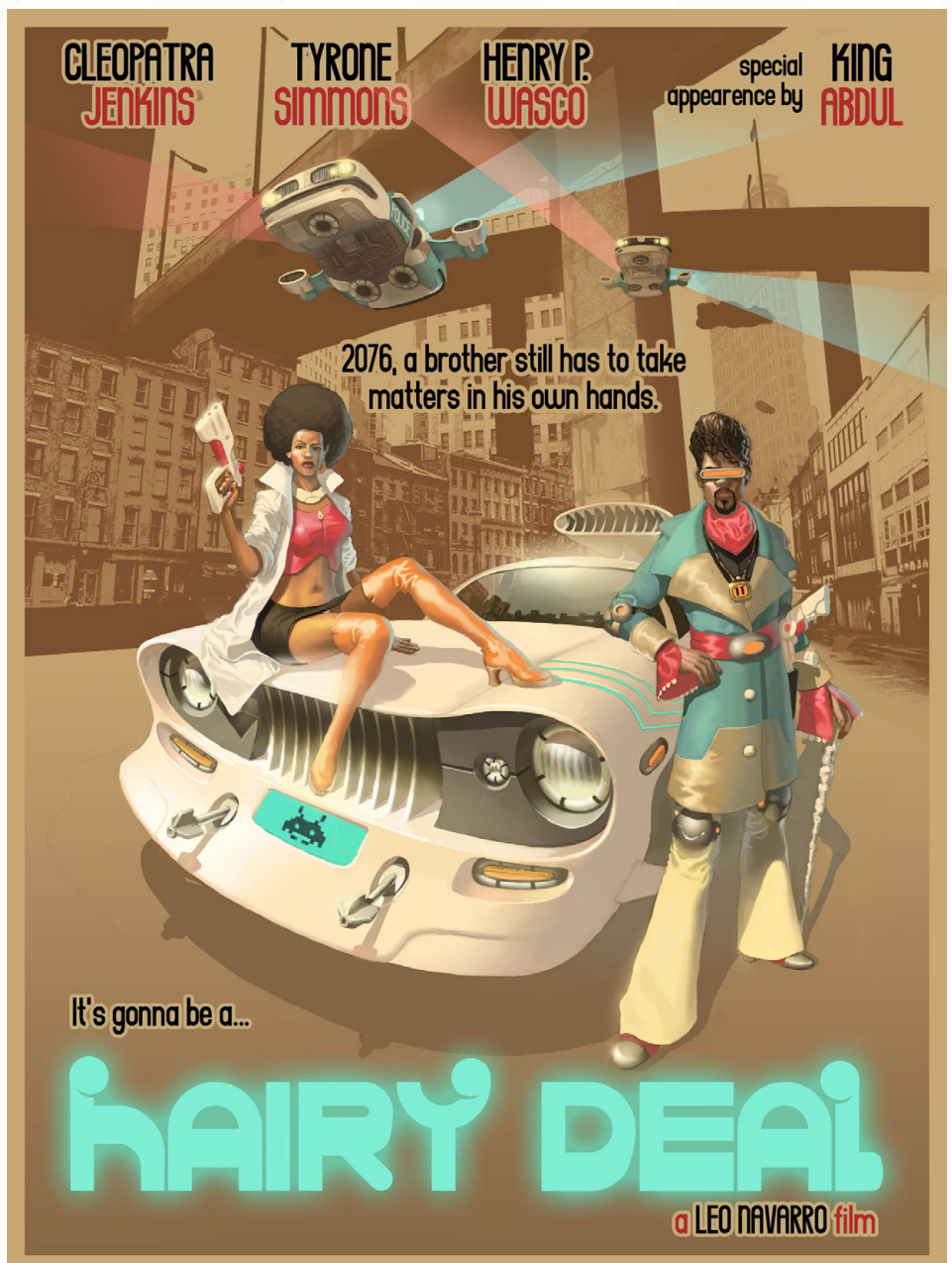
their work. There's no right way to do anything in art, and every opinion is subjective. Just take whatever you think is right (if you think anything is) in what others say, and use it to push forward and improve. Never let it push you down. Also, be sure to always have fun (or as much as possible when you get to be a professional!).

Luis Melo

For more work by this artist please visit:

www.luismelo.net

Or contact them at:

luis.m.melon@gmail.com

Interviewed by: Ben Barnes

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"I see a lot of sketches that are all crazy and look like they were done by someone on Speed, or they only had like five minutes to finish it. Granted, I am sure that does actually happen on occasion, and it does create energy and so on, but ideally I prefer to let my mind grasp what I am trying to draw..."
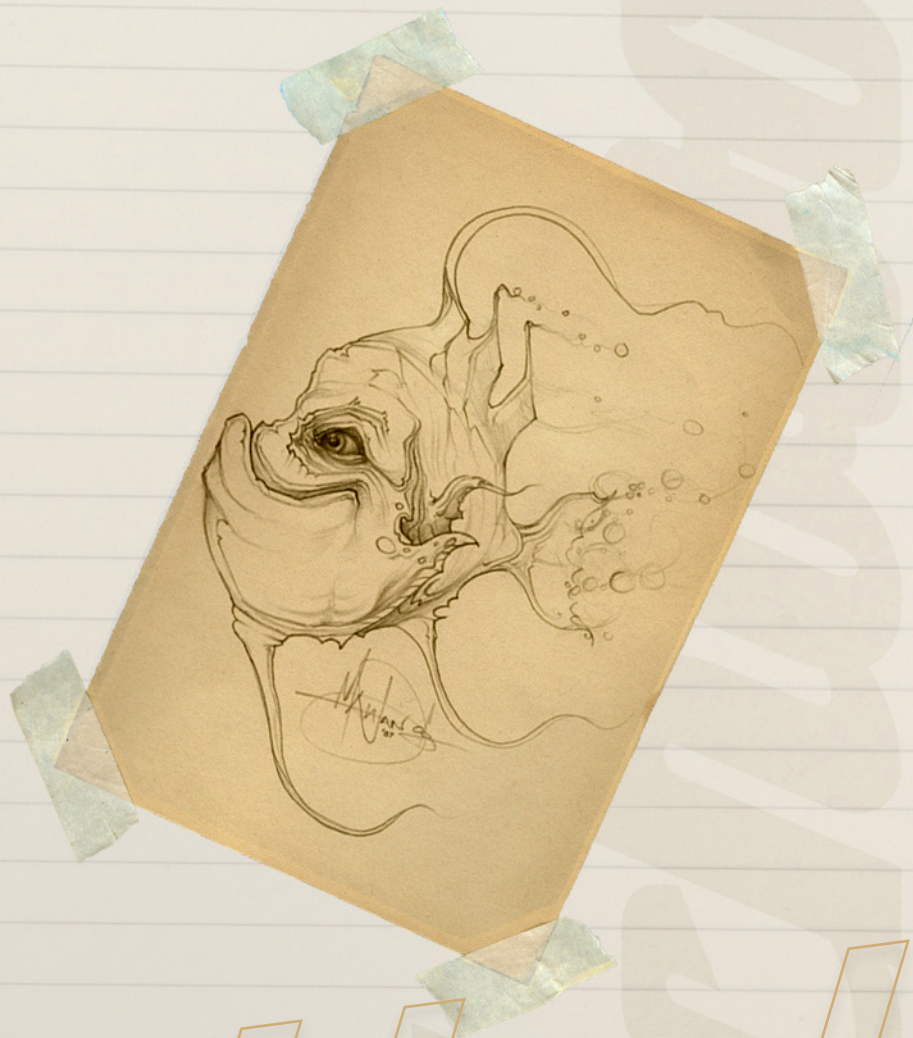
the Sketchbook

of Matt Dangler

Hello and welcome to my world! That is the most important ingredient when developing a sketch: making it *your* world. These days, I am mostly sketching to develop a finished painting. That is, character studies, composition studies and landscape studies that are all driven towards a common goal: a painting. I believe that it is crucial for an artist to know themselves both inside and out...

The deeper you journey inside of your head, and the more honest you are when putting what you experience inside of you onto the paper, the more interesting your sketch and art will become. In my case, it is an extremely bizarre world at times: allegorical, humorous and disturbing depictions that at first glance seem to make no sense, but that is only because we are all locked into the monotonous normality of society. We need to shatter the 'norm' and liberate the truth!

I like to create a story inside of a painting - something that describes what I am going through, both consciously and sub-consciously. My goal is to create something that speaks to us through subtle, innate archetypes that cannot be expressed through words. I want to keep the concept open enough to allow the viewer to experience it in their own personal way. I feel that there are nice designs, colours, compositions, concepts and so on, and then there are paintings that belong in a separate category - ones that unlock a gateway into something much more profound than what we can only visually see. All of us are capable of creating such a thing, and being true to what the subtle voices and emotions inside of us are trying to express is a good start to reaching that goal.

Barbarians

So, here is a sketch that I developed using a 4B pencil and white chalk pastel on grey toned paper. I usually do a dozen or so little thumbnail doodles that are just shapes that represent the relationship between positive and negative shapes in a composition, but other times I do what I did with this sketch and just start drawing. I draw lightly to erase what I do not like and darken the lines as the drawing develops.

I always draw and paint using the rule: general to specific; looser to very tight; big chunky brushes to tiny one hair brushes... you get the idea. This drawing is a good example of what you would find under all of my paintings. The areas where I feel need the most attention - the focal point in other words - will have the most detail, the most texture, or the greatest contrast in value to bring the viewer's eye over to it.

In Barbarians you can see that I want you to look at that nasty frog - 'Crocodile Dundee' - looking character, but I also want you to pay attention to the play of light glowing from the key.

As you can see, I made a few adjustments through the painting process. I decided that the sword in the foreground of the sketch and the open mouth of the frog creature was a little too distracting. I was also true to myself; I kept seeing this meditating "Venus of Willendorf"-like figure in my mind, so I decided to add her. All of a sudden, it gave this piece an entirely new concept, and it gave me the impression that it was the missing piece in the puzzle.

A black and white answer is what I am trying to avoid. A painting that only has a punch line will not hold a person's attention for very long. I want enough information to guide the viewer to their own world, as I mentioned (in other words) at the beginning of this article. But overall, as you can see, the sketch was a crucial part in developing this painting, it was truly the skeleton of the paint spirits.

Alaskan Snowfly Hunter

I see a lot of sketches on the Internet, or through various books, that are all crazy and scratchy and look like they were done by someone on Speed, or if they only had like five minutes to finish it. Granted, I am sure that does actually happen on occasion, and it does create energy and so on, but ideally I prefer to let my mind grasp what I am trying to draw. I do not like the scratchy lines on the paper to dictate what my next move will be, in other words. But even so (and sorry to seem contradicting), I do like to change it up a bit to keep my hand and art fresh, and to help keep things enjoyable. So even I will scratch a few drawings up like a madman, especially after a bad day, which we all encounter from time to time.

Anyhow, here is a typical looking, thought-out sketch that I will do - the kind that I described as "letting my mind grasp what I am trying to draw". I lightly and cautiously sketched this out with a blue pencil and then reinforced the value of the line with a black pencil. I also use archival paper to preserve the longevity of my drawings, with hopes that people will enjoy them long after they are created.

I was happy with this sketch after the first shot at it, so I decided to use it for the finished painting. I do not recommend creating only one sketch if time allows you to do so; multiple and even dozens of sketches should be explored before a painting is started. Also,
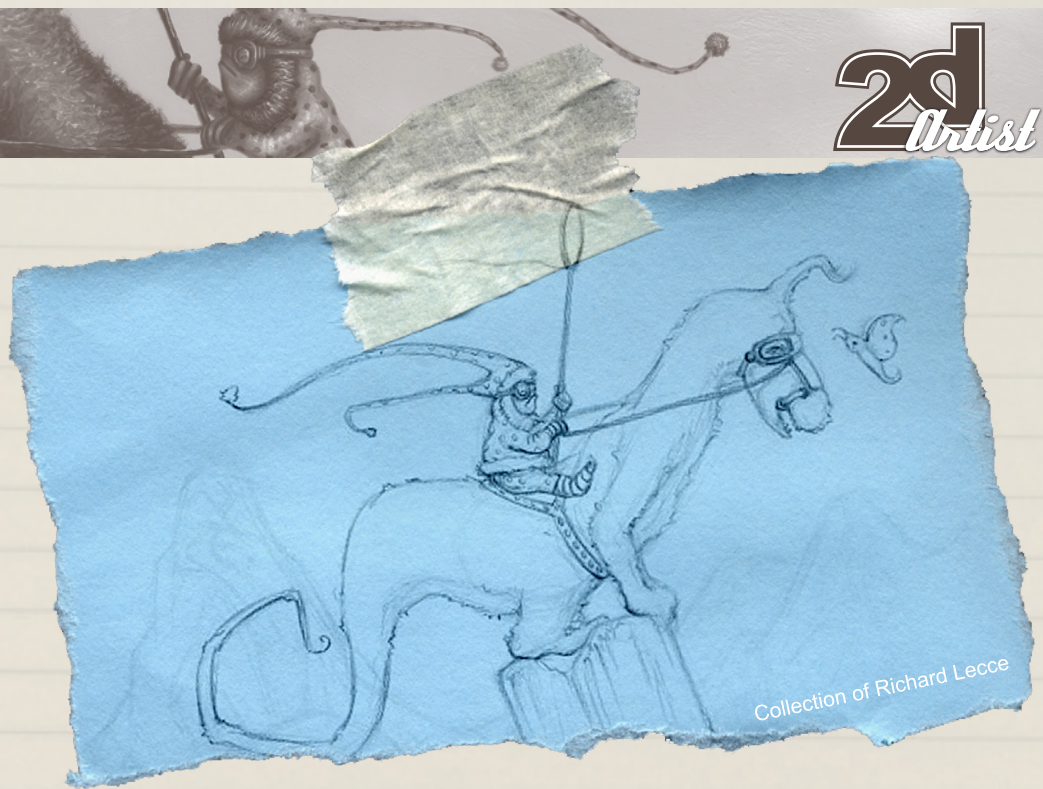
Collection of Richard Lecce

references should be gathered for areas that you can not get quite right, and I would also recommend having at least five other sets of eyes look over your finished drawing before you begin the painting. The public eye is just as important as professionals'; you need to hear what everyone has to say and then sort out what you feel is important to help your painting. I cannot tell you how many times I have had a drawing that I spent like three days on that I thought was perfect before I asked John Smith to take a glance, who then points out that, "He looks kind of decapitated", or "Ooohhh, I love that frog", when in reality it was actually supposed to be a horse or something.

It happens, especially when you are on top of a painting or drawing for very long periods of time and you miss the little things that will make all the difference. Or, you just completely miss everything sometimes! So make sure you get a lot of critiques if you can, especially on your drawing where it can be easy to make changes.

As you can see, I stayed very close to the sketch with this painting, with the exception of putting a slight body tilt on the rider to create a little more tension and juxtaposition between him and his goofy, fuzzy salamander horse creature.


Collection of Richard Lecce

Tina Sketch

Here is a sketch that I developed using the theme of candy. (I have not completed the painting yet, but feel free to check out my website to see if it is there yet.) The more you sketch and realise who you are and who you are as an artist, the easier and more free-flowing your world will become to you. Using the candy theme, I envisioned this "Candy Moth" that lives in some far away realm inside somebody's subconscious... He dreams of candy and hallucinates about desserts in the clouds. His only job is to keep the creatures in the hills fed and healthy so they can keep that somebody's subconscious active and fuelled. The only thing these creatures want to eat is ants, but not just any ants; they need to be saturated with sweet

Date

Collection of Christina Schiro
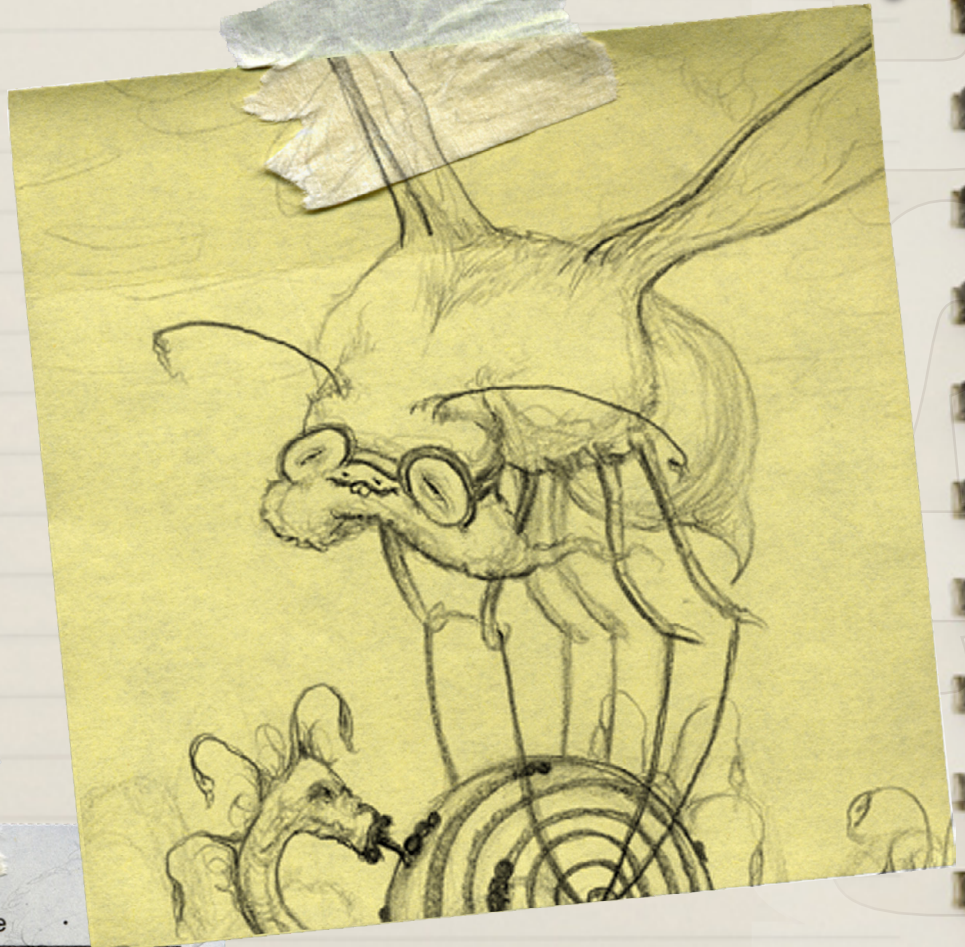
imagination and a touch of the collective unconscious. So the Candy Moth feeds and completely saturates the ants with his special sweets before he delivers them to the creatures in the hills, and to this day that is really how that somebody's sub-conscious keeps healthy and active.

It is amazing when you know how it really works, right? Listen, I am not the only one that is crazy on the inside! Let it free from your mind onto paper and, trust me, you will not regret it! Whether you share it with the world or not is up to you, but between you and the paper there shouldn't be any rules of "right and wrong", or what society manipulates you into thinking what is cool or corny... Travel deep inside yourself and find some liberation!

Collection of Richard Lecce

Here are some sketches* to help you begin.

Thank you everyone! Best of luck, and don't forget to enjoy yourselves!!

Matt Dangler

For more information please visit

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Or contact:

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"I am moved by many things, from cutting-edge contemporary art to the cave paintings in France…"

Moving Artwork

This month, we've asked 2D artists from a variety of

backgrounds and locations around the world:

What artwork has moved you emotionally/mentally, and why?

Here's what they said...

Moving Artwork

Andrew Hou

Senior Concept Artist, Webzen

Seoul, South Korea

"There are way too many…"

Benita Winckler

Freelance Illustrator, Berlin, Germany

"William Blake's, 'The Tyger'."

Christophe Vacher

Concept Artist, Painter & Art Director

Luxembourg & Los Angeles, USA

"The number of art works that have moved me is endless. You never stop discovering. You also get moved by different artworks at different times of your life. When I was a teenager, I was crazy about Frank Frazetta, Moebius, and all the famous artists from Heavy Metal magazine. Then I discovered other things, like the Hudson River School, The Pre-Raphaelites, The Orientalists, The Symbolists, Art Nouveau, and so on… so many beautiful works, yet so many different types of emotions. Frank Frazetta's work evokes raw power and epic battles, while John William Waterhouse offers you the strange beauty of a melancholic middle age full of myths and romance. Frederic Church or Albert Bierstadt depict the first grandiose visions of the American West, while Alphonse Mucha's elegant style fascinates for his sense of composition and design."

Daniela Uhlig

Graphic Designer & Illustrator, Mobil Entertainment Company, Berlin, Germany

"Any deep artwork moves me emotionally, no matter in which way. If anybody bares one's thoughts or feelings, then we get a private part out of one's life. And this fact touches me."

image by Daniela Uhlig

Don Seegmiller

Freelance Concept Artist, Illustrator & Artist
Utah, USA

"I am moved by many things, from cutting edge contemporary art to the cave paintings in France."

Egil Paulsen

"H.R. Giger's 'Birth Machine'. It made me look at the world as a grown up."

Erich Schreiner

Freelance Artist, Germany

"I especially like Luis Royo's art books. I know they are just about fantasy pin-ups, but he does them in his own, unique style, and it is not easy at all to try doing one that has this Royo-like feel to them. And I have tried, often."

Justin Kellis

Graphic Artist, KICK Design, New York City

"I've been highly influenced by the work of Waterhouse and Tadema; their creations always struck a resonant chord with me. The way their compositions give the feeling of enveloping the viewer in a real scene, and telling complex stories with just one image, has always fascinated me. That and the classical and mythological settings and imagery made in my imagination, go wild. Any time I finish a painting I always compare it in my head to those Masters… and I'm always disappointed."

Kerem Beyit

Concept Artist & Illustrator, Aranim Media Factory, Turkey

"Well I guess Frank Frazetta's works have always amazed me. You know, as a little kid seeing his fantasy works, his technique blew my seven-year old mind."

Mike Corriero

Freelance Concept Artist & Illustrator
Colonia, NJ, USA

"If I see a piece of work that moves me emotionally, it's probably something that I can

image by Erich Schreiner

relate to a song or memory in life. It may also be an image that mentally draws me into the world of this person's mind through the lighting and depth, the atmosphere and detail. If I can feel the world breathing and the interaction with the characters and actions taking place as if they truly exist, or that I can picture this being animated and moving in a film, then it's something that has moved me in one way or another. That's when you know you've stumbled across a great piece of work, when you no longer look at it as just a drawing or just a painting and you believe it to be real."

Mikko Kinnunen

Environment Artist, Recoil Games
Helsinki, Finland

"Not many. I think war photographs can have much more impact on me than anything that's just 'made up'."

Misty Coats

UI & Concept Artist, High Voltage Software, Hoffman Estates, IL, USA

"The works of artists such as Micheal Whealan and Frank Franzetta have always been what I've looked to for inspiration. Works such as theirs, and other artists of high fantasy art, even

Masamune Shirow, have always moved me. I find that these types of artists just captivate my attention with their detail and stories. Their works always seem to take me to another place and really spark a fire in my own emotions and artwork."

Paul Wright

"Monet's 'Waterlilies': such a huge, single-minded, creative body of work."

Raluca Iosifescu

"Goya's 'The sleep of reason produces monsters', Salvador Dali's and Escher's works, and some of Michael Zancan's paintings ('Below the rust', 'I fill desert with uselessness', 'Walls of the unsaid'). I have a thing with bizarre, absurd and surreal paintings."

Robert Chang

"Very rarely am I moved by static drawings/

paintings. I tend to respond emotionally to film, music, and literature far more. One painting I remember that I had a strong emotional response to was a sci-fi painting by Mike Evans; it's an oil painting of a female soldier hugging a male corpse hanging off of a meat-hook, and there are other corpses hung all around her. The dead corpses are soldiers identified only by a number printed on their chests. I remember thinking that it's a powerful image because all the corpses look the same, yet each are unique individuals that have loved ones mourning their deaths."

Robin Chyo

Concept Artist, Cryptic Studios
Los Gatos, California, USA

"I think 'Saturn Devouring His Children' by Francisco Jose de Goya is the first painting that really struck a chord with me. Sure, I've been exposed to plenty of other beautiful paintings before, but Goya gets the prize for making me feel both disturbed and in awe at the same time."

Rolando Cyril

"From my artworks? Hmmm, "La fable de la giraffe", because this was the first time I was proud of myself. Writing a fable is not easy. The second should be "Save our souls", because this is the real metaphor of my life. No-one knows this, but this piece is as if I was naked in front of the world, through this drawing."

Roy Stein

"The artwork of Boris Vallejo pushed me to work harder and to get better as an artist, and the amazing painting abilities of Simon Bisley showed me how to make art 'your own'."

Ryohei Hase

Illustrator & Designer, Bandai Namco Games
Tokyo, Japan

"I am impressed by the work that I have never seen before, because it's very difficult to find new, creative, but very wonderful work."

image by Justin Kellis

image by Kerem Beyit

Sam Lamont

2D Animation Student, Glamorgan University

Trefforest, Wales, UK

"A hard question, as there has been so much. Bengal (http://www.cafesale.net/bengal/) is one of my favourite artists; I love her simple lines and subtle colouring. Jhonen Vasquez was one of the earliest influences on my work; I would try to create artwork with the same amount of expression and life that he gets into his own art, and fail miserably. On the colouring side of things, it was the videos on the website of Carlos Cabrera (http://www.carloscabrera.com.ar/tutorials/) that really got me to try and step my colouring up!"

Simon Dominic Brewer

I love art that tells a story. I appreciate technique, but unless the art takes me to another world then I always think there's something missing. However, there are so many great artists out there whose work I find amazing, it would be unfair to pick just one piece."

Simon Legrand

"I'd have to say that not one piece, but a whole period mentally moved me. The Renaissance, to me, is the most inspirational time in art history. It is when art finally and successfully merged with science and physiology/anatomy. Bodies were drawn with the knowledge of underlying structure."

Tim Warnock

Senior Matte Painter, Intelligent Creatures

Toronto Ontario, Canada

"'The Matrix' and 'The Lord Of The Rings' are the first to come to mind. I have watched those movies so many times... I'll stare at work on the various artists' sites that worked on them and compare the different approaches that each has

taken on the same subject matter. I'm drawn to the fantastic environments created for these films. It just never gets old for me."

Tuna Ferit

"I can't say that only one art work has moved me. I like realistic works, especially Picasso's early works (in his realistic period), for example 'First Communion'. And Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical drawings have attracted and influenced me since my childhood. All these works are really interesting and amazing. Maybe Leonardo's works are the reason that I have an interest in medical drawings now. The cubism trend started in the 20th Century; also the abstract trend is related to cubism trend, but these trends don't interest me so much. What excites me is an art work which is very well detailed in a realistic way. Three dimensions and the depth of an art work are very important for me."

image by Tim Warnock

Vinegar

Freelance Artist, Warsaw, Poland

"Lots of old Master's work; lots done by today's best CG painters, too... But just to name a few, I've always admired Caravaggio, various 19th Century painters (Odilon Redon, Aubrey Beardsley, Burne – Jones, Bouguereau, Secession, Symbolism and Art Nouveau in general) and Japanese Ukiyo-e (from around 18th-19th Century)."

Vitaly S. Alexius

Freelance Illustrator, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

"The paintings of Ivan Aivazovsky, because he painted the struggle of man against nature in a beautifully realistic and romantic way – brilliantly vibrant colours, living chaos and superb realism. The paintings of Salvador Dali, because he combined realism with illusion, thus producing surrealism."

Y. Soner Yurtseven

"There are lots of them, but the one that comes to my mind now, which I like its idea, concept and the action, is a short animation film by Pixar called, 'For The Birds'."

In next month's issue, find out what a group of artists said when we asked them:

What has had the most effect on where you are today?

image by Robert Chang

GALLERIES

Snatch

Marcin Jakubowski

www.balloontree.com

marcin@balloontree.com

Rainbow in My Heart

Teng Lin

linteng1981@hotmail.com

Wasteland

Peter Thompson

http://sketchypetesblog.blogspot.com/

pthompson@midway.com

Pterocephys

Pascal Raimbault

raimbaultpa@gmail.com

Follow a tutorial by Pascal about painting this 'evolutionary creature from a planet with very low gravity', in the following issue of 2DArtist!

Jungle

Daniel Ljunggren

http://darylart.com

daniel@darylart.com
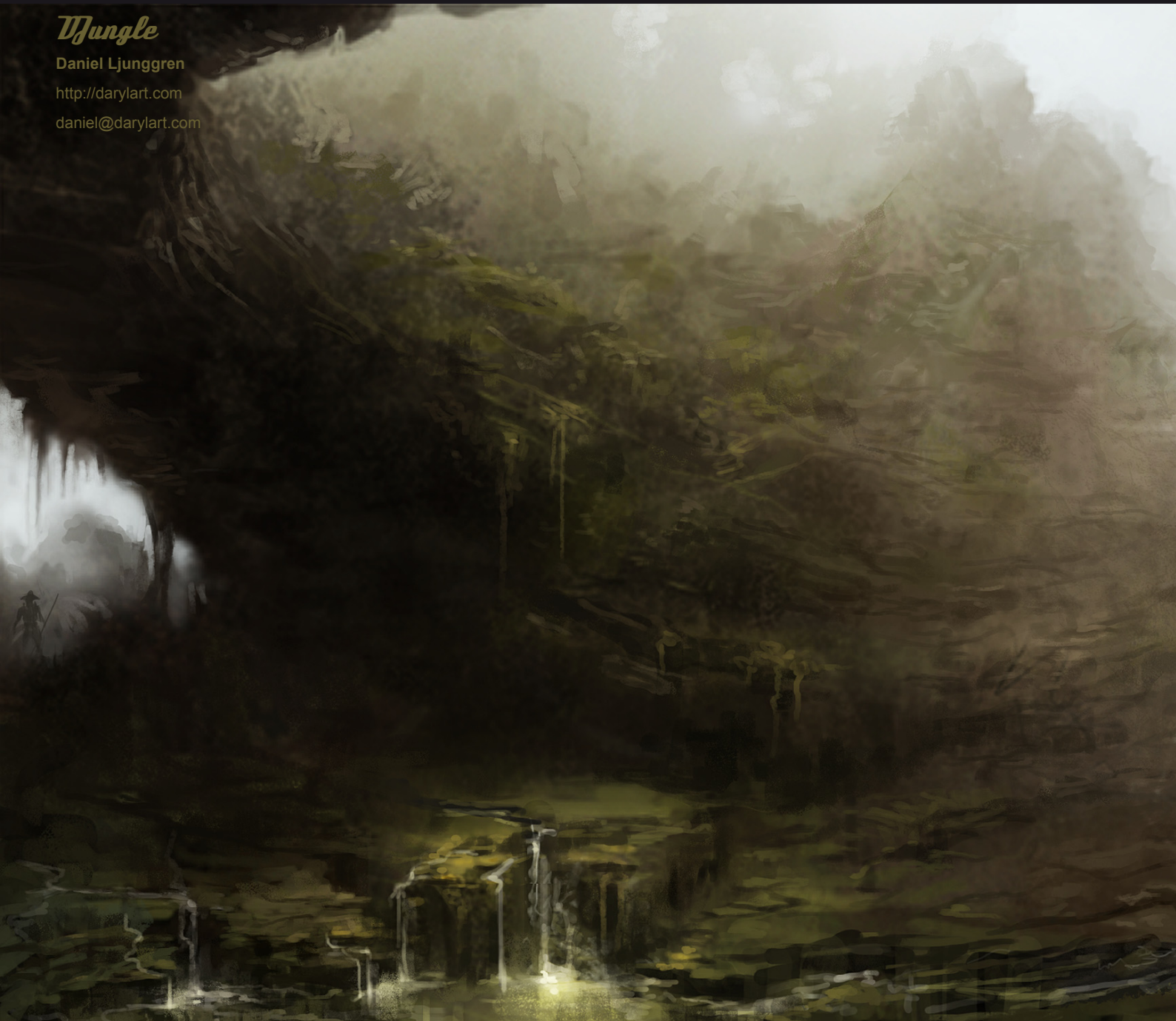
Lost World

Tiberius Viris

suirebit@kingofhouston.com

Untitled

Tom Arthur Opasinski

www.tom-arthur-opasinski.com

www@tom-arthur-opasinski.com

Syndaren Exotique

Robin Olausson

tv1000@spray.se

www.robin.reign.se/gallery

Be sure to follow the Making Of this image, by the talented Robin Olausson, in the following issue of 2DArtist magazine!

the matte painting challenge

The Matte Painting Challenge is a new
feature to this month's magazine. It runs
in conjuction with the challenge which
has been running in the Threedy Forums
by 2DArtist magazine regular, **Tiberius
Viris**. Here we will show the winners of
the last two Matte Painting challenges.
All Matte Painting Challenges in the
Threedy Forums are available for anyone
to enter, for prizes and goodies from the
www.3dtotal.com shop and the opportunity
of being seen in this very magazine...

the matte painting challenge

The Challenge

Welcome to the new section of the magazine: the Matte Painting Challenge. These challenges are for beginners to more advanced 2D artists that wish to have the opportunity to learn and practice digital matte painting, and benefit from the advice, critiques and activity of the friendly Threedy.com forums.

What's this all about?

Once every two months, we will set up a new topic in a special section of the Threedy Forums. You will be given a simple brief and a few guidelines, then the rest is up to you! As a general rule, all of these challenges will start on the 1st of each month and end on the 30th. Through running these challenges, we are hoping to give you the opportunity to learn and practice digital matte painting, whilst at the same time winning some attractive prizes and benefiting from the Threedy community environment.

What are we looking for?

You may think two months is a long time for a challenge, but these are not 'speed' challenges... We are looking for final, stand-alone finished images, and we will be showing the winners in this very magazine!

The rules are pretty laid back: all we ask is that you submit 1 x 2D image. We will simply give you a raw image and all you have to do is to 'matte-paint' it into a specific scene, as per the brief. You must use the high-res, raw image that we provide - no other matte paintings based on other images will be accepted, as this will deviate from the challenge briefs. The minimum
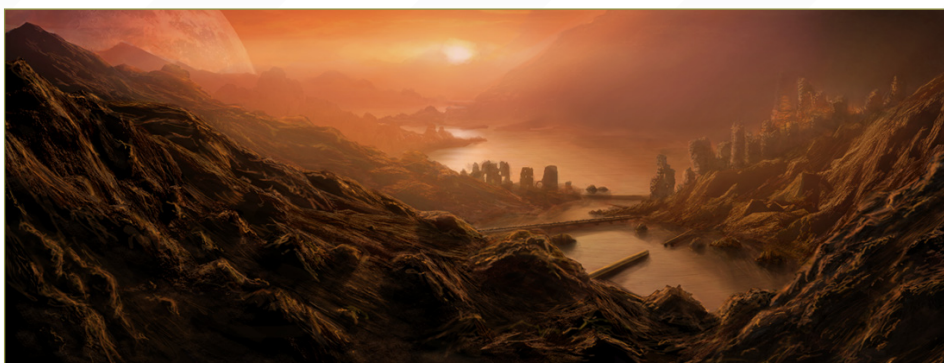
1st RQuack

2nd Eyecon

eric_dimaala@yahoo.com
http://frenic.deviantart.com/gallery
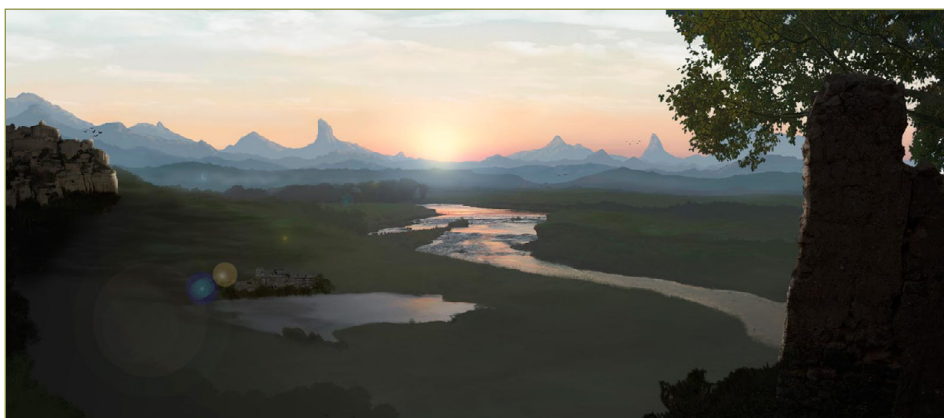
3rd lilguy

accepted width/height is 1024 pixels, but we recommend a width/height of 1600 pixels, if possible.

We also ask that you create a WIP thread in the 'Work in Progress' sub forum in the 'Matte Painting' forum on www.threedy.com (Threedy

Forums > The Threedy Challenges > Matte Painting Challenges > Work in Progress). This way, you can receive feedback and help along the way!

Each competition will last for the duration of 2 months, with the deadline being the end of

1st mrpeculiar   peculiarpatterns@hotmail.com

the month (GMT). For a valid entry, just make sure your final image is posted in the main competition thread before the deadline. With most challenges, we put the voting out to the audiences, but we also have a special panel of judges for this as we are choosing the best image that we feel best fits the category of 'Matte Painting'.

So, dust of your Wacoms, get your reference images ready and get stuck into our current Matte Painting Challenge over at threedy.com!

Here are the winners of the last two Matte Painting Challenges:

Challenge 1: *Dramatic Sunset*

Challenge 2: *Lost Valley*

The current challenge taking place is:
Day to Night

To join the next challenge, or to view previous and/or current entries, please visit:

www.threedy.com

Or contact: chris@zoopublishing.com

2nd Eyecon   eric_dimaala@yahoo.com
http://frenic.deviantart.com/gallery

3rd guitarsimo30

the

2DA challenge

2DArtist Magazine introduces the 'Challenge' section of the mag. Every month we will run the Challenges, available for anyone to enter for prizes and goodies from the www.3dtotal.com shop and to also get featured in this very magazine! The 2D Challenge runs in the ConceptArt.org forums and the 3D challenge runs in the Threedy.com forums. Here we will display the winners from the previous month's challenge, and the Making Ofs from the month before that...

Herbivore Dinosaur

Stylised Animal challenge

In Association with

CONCEPTART.org

THREEDY FORUMS

Stylised Animal Challenge

Herbivore Dinosaur

The Challenge

Welcome to the Stylised Animal Monthly Challenge. Each month, we will select an animal and post some images in the forum thread as reference. All you have to do is to create a 2D image of this creature in a stylised/abstract/cartoon style, whilst keeping your creature instantly recognisable. We wanted to publish some content in 2DArtist Magazine on how to create stylised animals, such as you see in the many feature films and cartoon galleries. We thought this regular competition might bring in just

6th Paweu
paweu@ht.pl

5th Grenogs

7th Sawa
http://blog-sawa.blogspot.com/

the images and Making Ofs that we need, whilst giving away great prizes and exposure. If it continues in success, we will try to boost the prizes as much as possible! This month's animal was the Herbivore Dinosaur. Here you can see the top seven entries, as voted for by the public...

What are we looking for?

Funny and humorous entries which break the animal down to its most recognisable components; emphasise these in whichever ways you think best, and render your stylised/abstract/cartoon masterpiece. The rules are pretty laid back: please submit 1 x 2D render (minor post work is OK); it's up to you if you want to have a background or include graphical elements or text on your image. Renders of the 800 pixel dimension sound about right, but the winners will be featured in 2DArtist Magazine, so if you can create some higher resolution images too, all the better! There will be one competition per month, with the deadline being the end of the month (GMT). For a valid entry, just make sure your final image is posted in the main competition thread before the deadline. We require the top 3 winners to submit Making Of overview articles that will be shown on either 3DTotal or in 2DArtist magazine. These need to show the stages of

4th Nightblue
xiaochangl@mail.smu.edu

4th Chate Noire

I FEEL DIZZY~~

Stylized Stegoceras   by CHENGSHUWAN

3rd Linbar
chengshuwan@gmail.com
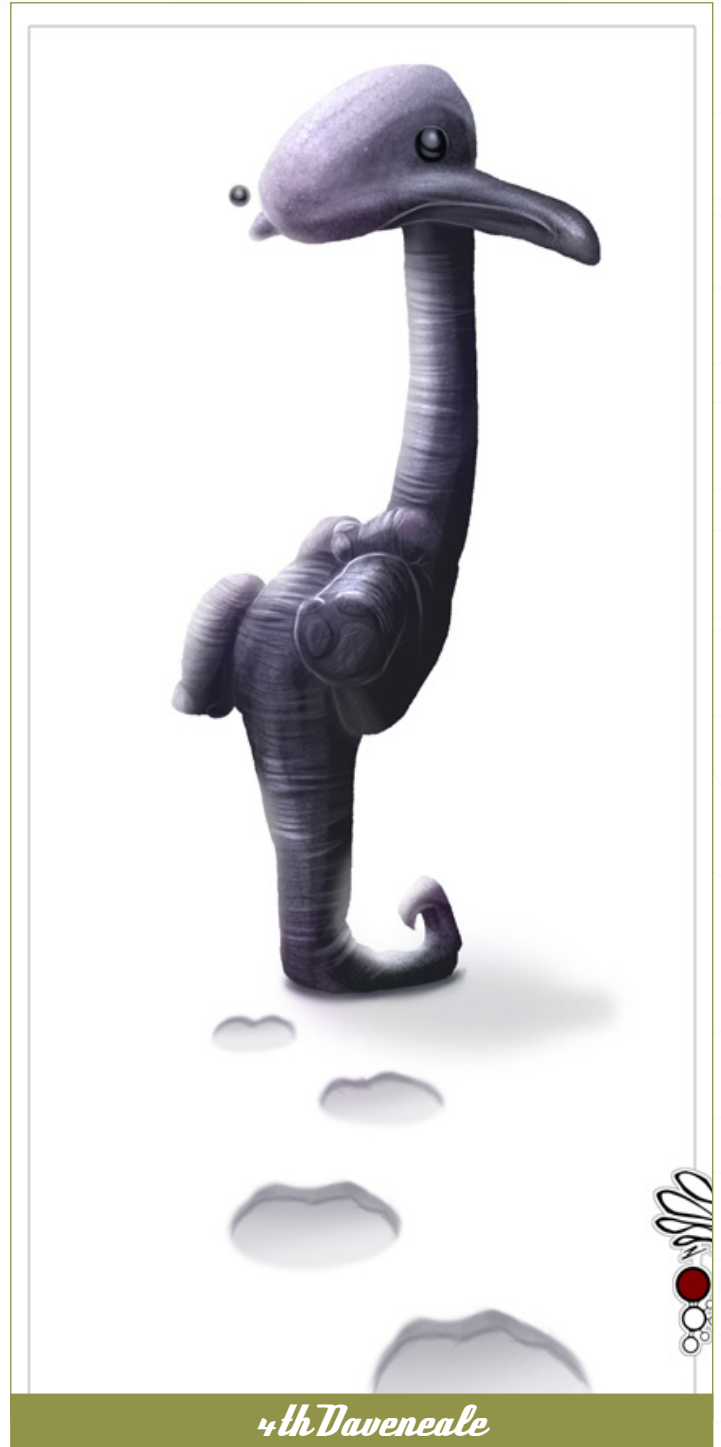
4th Daveneale

your creation, different elements and some brief explanation text of why, and how, you did what you did. We will format this into some nice-looking pages to give you some great exposure, and us some quality content! Each competition will start with one main thread, starting with the brief at the top. All entrants should post all WIPs, give feedback and generally laugh at the crazy ideas that are emerging each month...

Challenge Thread
Herbivore Dinosaur

The entire *Herbivore Dinosaur* competition can be viewed here.
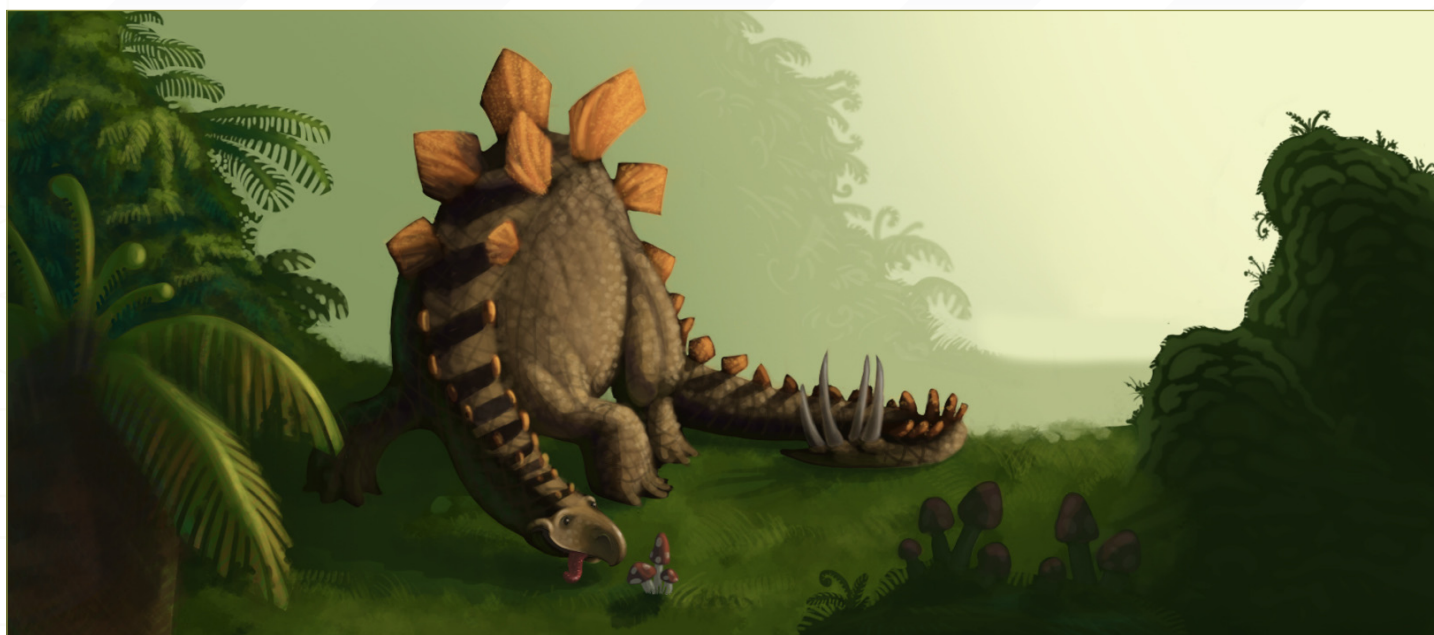
2nd Scarypotato

1st Einen

The current challenge at the voting stage is:

Dinosaur: Carnivore

The current challenge taking place is:

Swimming Dinosaur

To join the next challenge, or to view previous and/or current entries, please visit:

www.conceptart.org

Or, for the 3D Challenge, please visit:

www.threedy.com

Or contact: lynette@zoopublishing.com

3D Challenge

Here are this month's top three winning entries from the 3D competition...

2nd Mape mapestudio-on@hotmail.com

1st Norman Anderson norman.lemes@gmail.com

3rd Nyphe
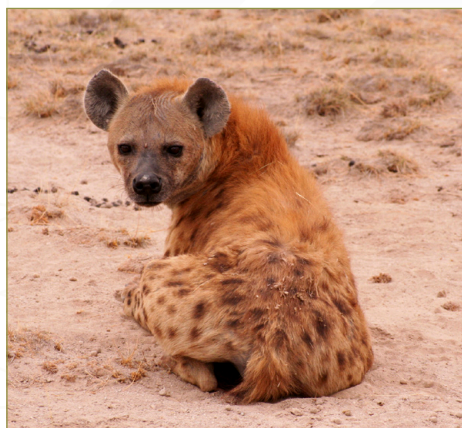
Making Ofs

Here are the Making Ofs from last month's top 2 winning entries...

2nd - Juan T. Caruso

Step 1:

I started with some doodles (Fig01). Important note: have fun doodling, please! The sketch of the kid is telling me some kind of history… the others are simply hyena sketches and nothing more. Besides, the situation makes me smile! Once I had decided on one, I made a sketch of the idea (Fig02). The sketch was then scanned in at 200 dpi.

Step 2:

I opened up the TIFF file in Photoshop, and in a new layer I traced the line art (Fig03) with a brush (FigA – 1). I deleted the pencil layer and made a new one behind the traced line art. On this new layer I added a background colour, and with an SSS brush (FigA – 2) I added the flat colours for the hyena and the kid (Fig04). I wasn't too concerned about the flat colour

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

1

2
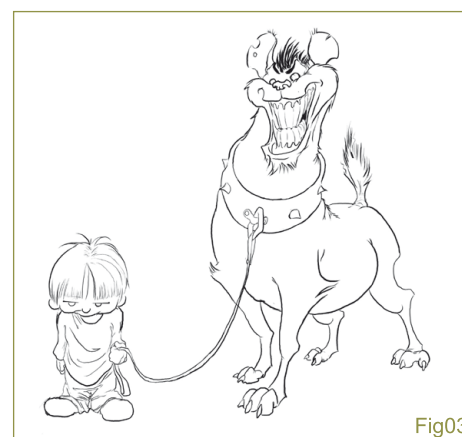
3
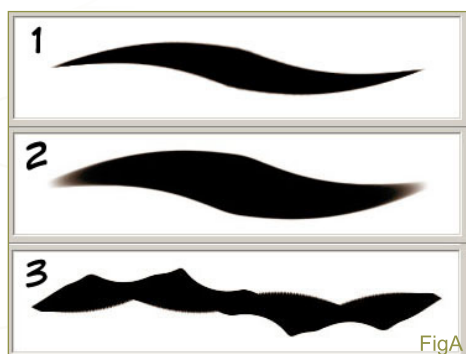
FigA
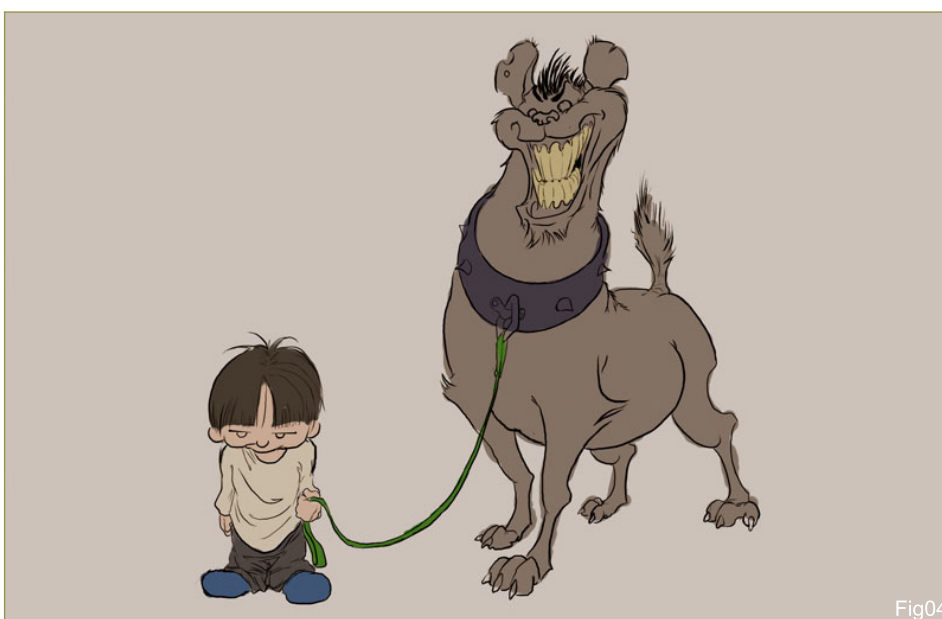
Fig04

selection; once they have all been coloured you can (if you want) edit them by selecting each one with the Magic Wand tool, and then open the Hue/Saturation window (press Ctrl + U on your keyboard).

Step 3:

I then added a new layer over the one with the flat colours, and then started adding some shadowed and light areas (Fig05). For the background, on a new layer (behind the line art), I started the fence using my sketching brush (FigA – 3) with basic colours. Next came the houses: I created a new layer behind, and with the selection tools, Polygonal Lasso tool (short-cut key: L) and the Rectangular Marquee tool (short-cut key: M), I made a basic silhouette of the houses, then filled them in with the Gradient
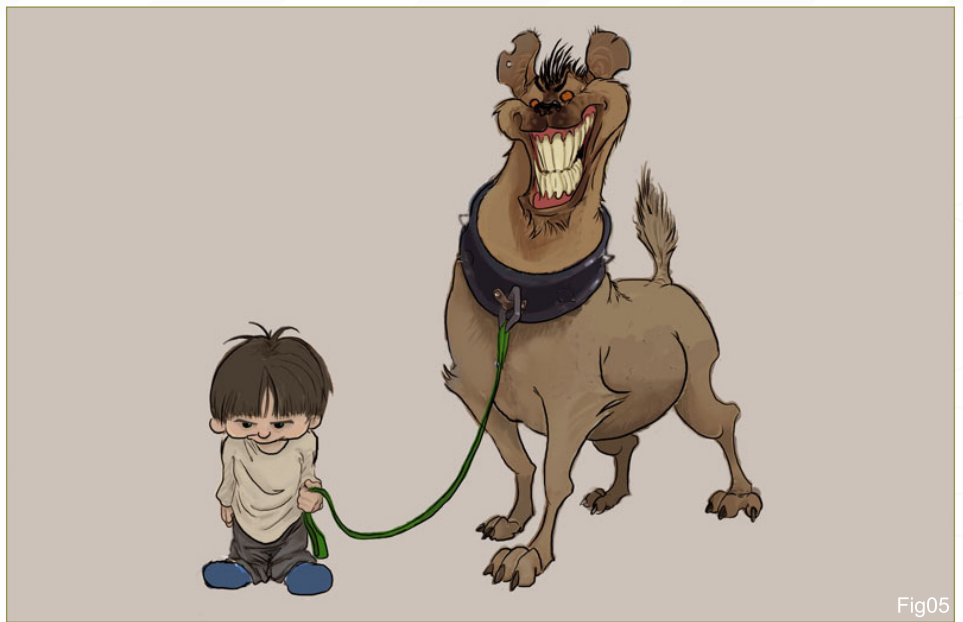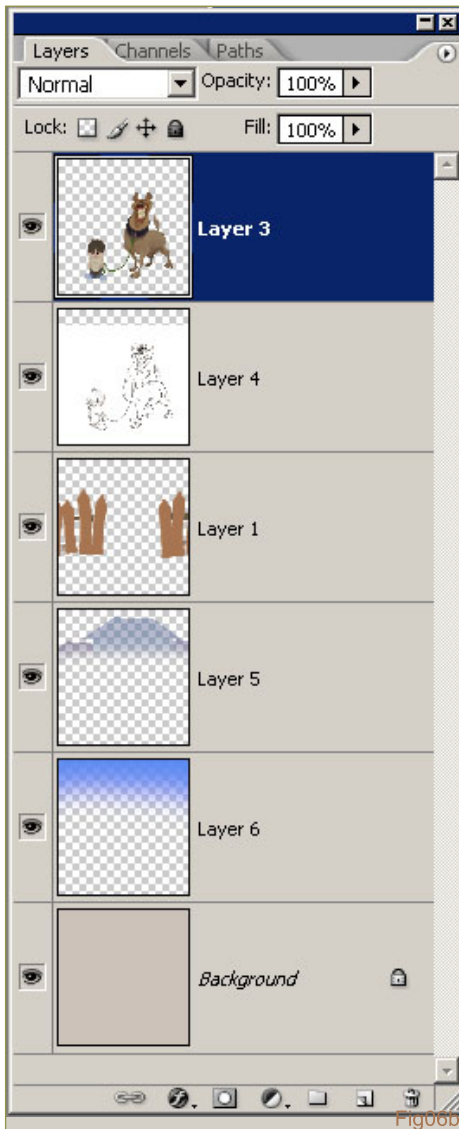
Fig05

Fig06b

Fig06a

tool (short-cut key: G). The sky was done on another new layer behind the houses. I made this one using the Gradient tool, only. I then adjusted the layer opacity of the three last layers and erased the bottom parts of them with an airbrush Eraser (Fig06). Fig06b shows the layer window (Fig06b).

Step 4:

To finish off, I added the details and some highlights. With the SSS brush, I added lines to the wood of the fence, details to the hair of the boy, spikes on the dog collar, details of the eyes, and defined the sneakers (Fig07). For the Hyena's spots, I use a half-tone pattern (Fig07b)

which I added on a new layer, modifying the pattern with the Free Transform option (short-cut key: Ctrl + T) and erasing parts. I added a rock path with the SSS brush on another new layer, behind the sky layer. Over the rock path layer I added a new layer to cast the shadow of the two characters using an SSS brush. Once I had

defined the shadow, I applied a Gaussian Blur effect (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur).

Juan J. Caruso

For more work by this artist please contact them at: juan_carusoart@yahoo.com
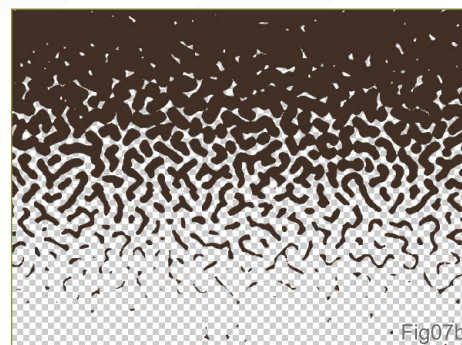
Fig07b
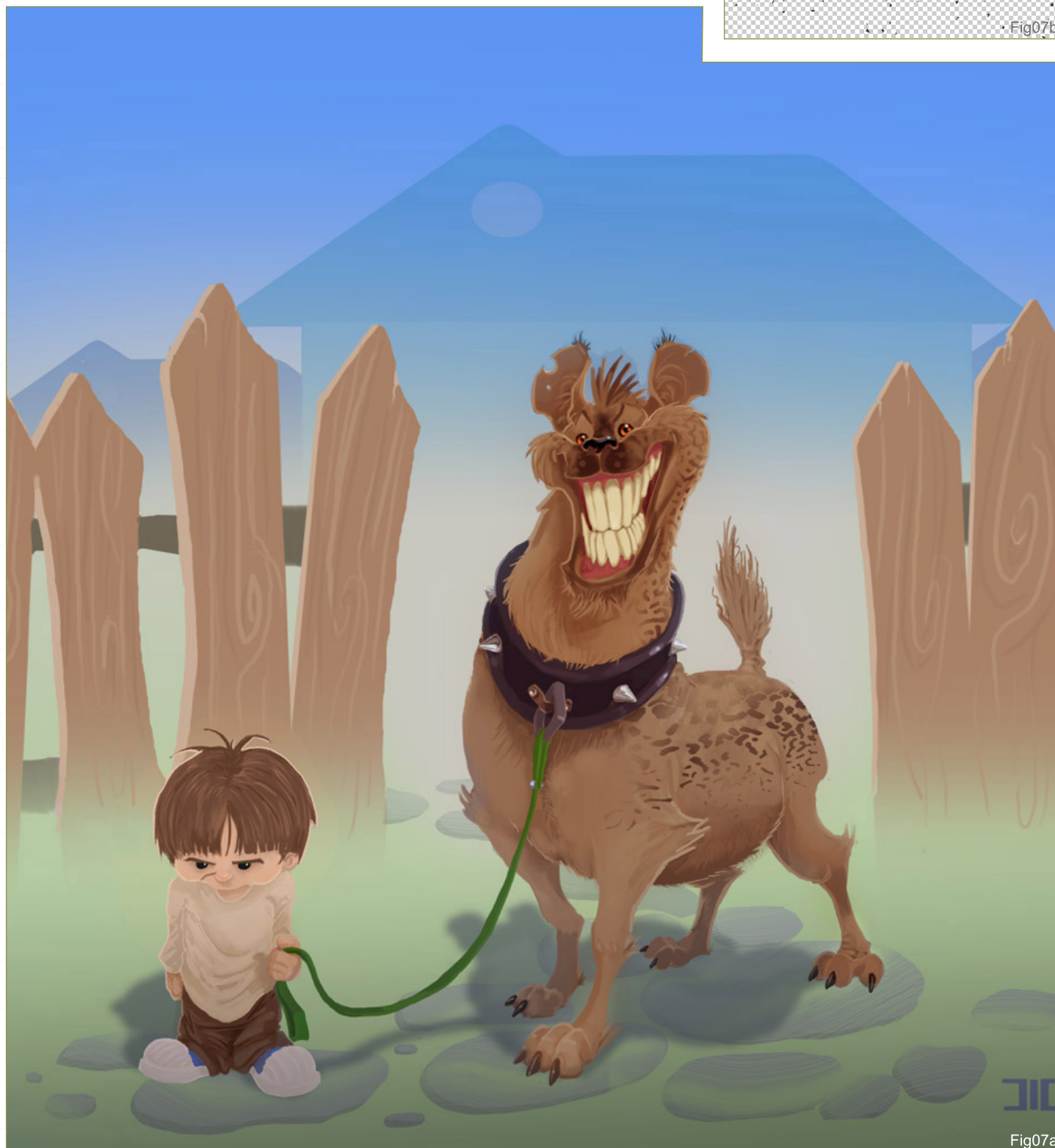
Fig07a

1st - Jonatan Iversen-Ejve

Step 1:

This painting is a prime example of me starting in one direction end ending up in a completely different one. When I began, I pictured an insane hyena surrounded by several tribal masks, but after re-doing the sketch several times it looked way more sinister than I had intended. I continued on that one instead, making a character more or less inspired by The Joker from Batman in terms of personality.
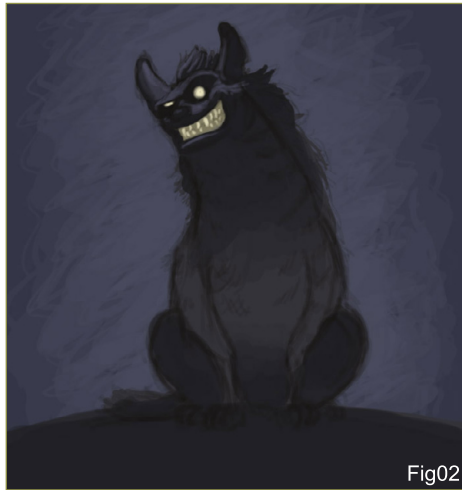
Fig02

Fig01

Fig03

This sketch was very loose even by my standards, but I tried to focus somewhat on the face as well as exaggerating its neck (Fig01).

Step 2:

With the original idea out of the picture, I now had to come up with a new setting as well as lighting and mood. Since I'm a sucker for night time settings I thought I'd make it dark, and the face would be darker than the body but with shining eyes and teeth. I started painting on a layer below the line art and made the base colour an overall dark blue. I then tried out what the shining eyes and teeth might look like later, which was pretty unnecessary considering I knew I'd have to redo it later anyway. Oh well (Fig02).

Step 3:

I liked the idea of the lower body having a warmer colour than the head, so I experimented a bit as well as adding some details to the face. Step 2 actually helped me realise that the hyena's right eye was too high up, so it was lowered. I really didn't have an idea of what to put in the background yet, but I did know I wanted him to be sitting on a hill. At the moment it

was pretty badly made with a custom brush, but it was mostly to give it a grassy base for later (Fig03).

Step 4:

Starry, moonlit skies are always fun to make, and I now knew that I wanted an African savannah for the background. I started on a new layer upon the line art for some more detail work on the face and fur. The ear was made a little translucent, and the tiny skull mark was cheesy enough to get to stay. It added cuteness and made this hyena thug more 'bad ass' at the same time (Fig04).

Step 5:

I now made the final details on the face. The teeth were completely re-done, and accessories like the earrings and dots over the eye were added. I painted the fur with a more natural brush to add texture and volume, added more light to the rim on its back, and made the skull mark look like it was painted on the fur. The horizon got straightened up, the clouds, trees and bushes got more details, and everyone was happy (Fig05).

Fig04

Fig05

Final step:

Some last details were added, like the tiny bones at the hyena's paws and the fireflies around him, and then some final touches to the overall picture... First a texture on Overlay at low opacity was added for a nice effect (metal surfaces make great textures for most pictures). On top of that, a Color Burn layer was added at low opacity, with an orange-brown colour to give it a warmer and more night-like feel. The last thing was to flatten the image and Sharpen, so it really looked tight and finished. Which it is by now!

These challenges are great fun, and I'll be sure to participate further in the future!

Jonatan Iversen-Ejve

For more work by this artist please visit:
http://einen.deviantart.com/
Or contact them at:
jonatan.ie@gmail.com

www.vue6.com

e-on software

Solutions for
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Custom Brushes

This month, Carlos Cabrera shows us how to create a couple of custom brushes which he uses on a daily basis in his own work. Enjoy! ...

Custom Brushes

Created In:

Adobe Photoshop 7

Fig01

Fig02

Introduction

In this new Custom Brush tutorial we are going to create two families of the favourite brushes I use on daily basis in my illustrations. The goal when you are creating your own brushes is to make your digital illustrations a little less "digital" and more artistic instead. In today's concept art scene, this is a goal we must reach if we ever want to work for a video games company. Most of the companies out there are looking for artistic illustrations ratter than digital ones (besides the obvious quality of course).
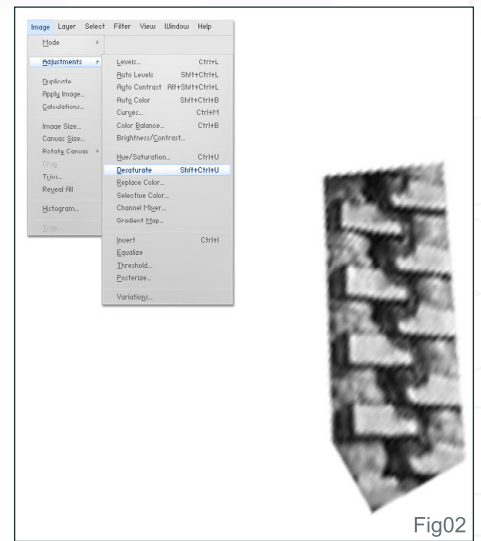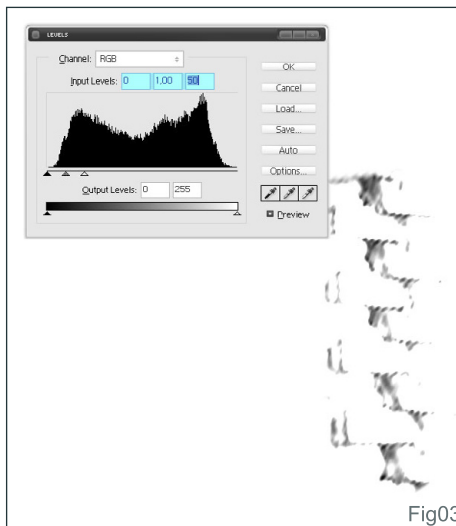
Fig03
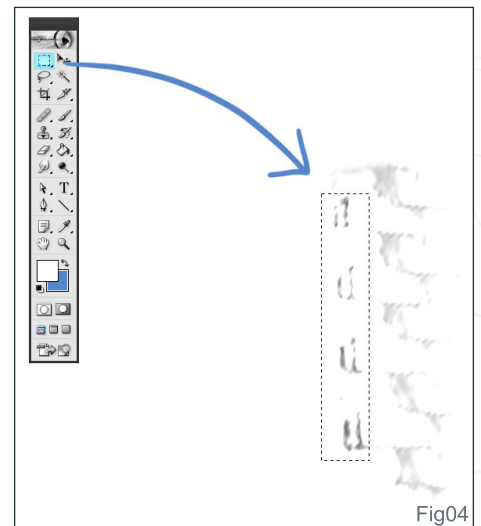
Fig04
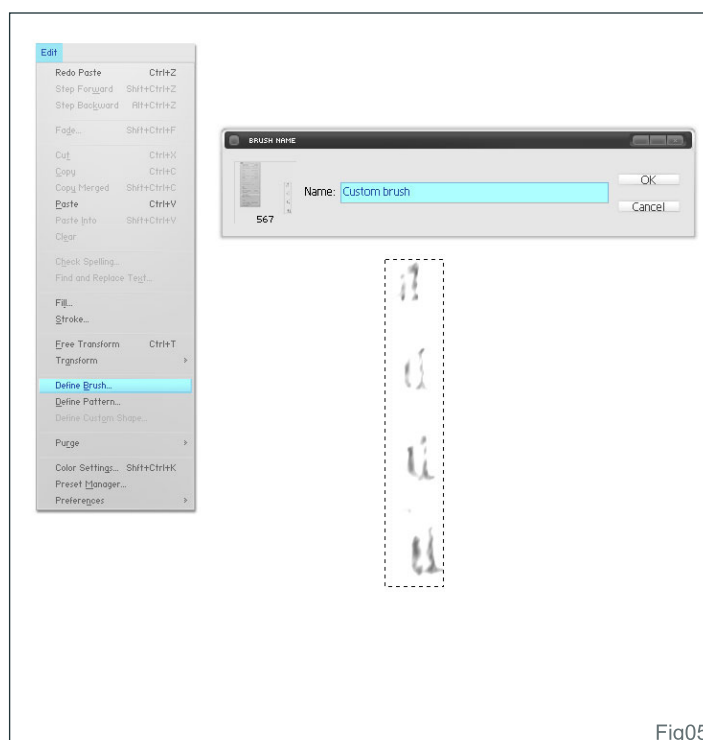
Fig05

The two brush families that we are going to create in this tutorial are:

- Hair

- Skin/Textured

We are going to use the brush, "Hair" to create our monster's hair, to texture backgrounds and to smoothly blend our colours.

The "Skin" brush is instead going to be used to create the monster's skin, the armour texture or old metals that we can use for backgrounds. Mainly, we are going to give our illustrations a less "digital" touch with this last one.

Let's Start with the 'Hair' Brush...

Firstly, we need to search online, or in our texture folders, for a picture similar to the one I have used to create this brush (it doesn't need to be the same; it can be fairly different) (Fig01). In this case, as you can see, the picture I used is actually a zipper from a pair of trousers. It's rather weird that we are able to create a hair brush with this picture, don't you think? Well, we just need to modify certain values in Photoshop to make this zipper morph into our precious brush!

Something I always recommend to people that write to me asking for advice, is to always have a texture folder stored on your computer. It can contain pictures you took yourself, or copyrighted textures you bought from some wonderful texture author (there are plenty around right now). These textures or pictures can be used in your illustrations, as references, or like in this case to create a new brush for our work.
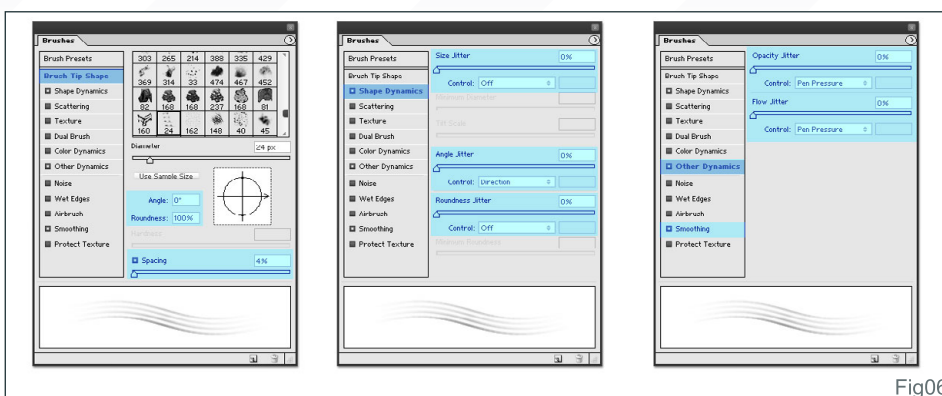

Fig06

Back to the brush: we open a new document where we place our new texture (File > New), then we take away the colour from this texture by using the Desaturate option, as we can see from the next picture (Fig02) (Image > Adjustments > Desaturate). We can also desaturate this image with our nifty short-cut: Shift + Ctrl + U. Now we have a black and white zipper, but we still need to modify some values in order to build our hair brush. We open the Levels window (Image > Adjustments > Levels) and we enter the following values: 0, 1.00, 50. We can see (Fig03) that when we changed these values, the texture lost some of its grey, leaving a perfect texture for our brush.

Now we need to select the four squares on the left with the Selection tool (Fig04). The next step is very important, because it's the step in which we tell Photoshop that we want to create a brush. We go to Edit > Define Brush and a new window will pop up in order to let us write the name for our new brush. In this case, I just wrote "custom brush" (Fig05). Once we have our brush created, we need to select it from our library by right-clicking on top of our document and looking for it at the end of the list. Once we've selected our brush, we need to change some values to control its size, pressure and opacity. With our brush still selected, we go to the Brushes tab and click on "Brush Tip Shape", where we are going to enter the values that appear in the next picture (Fig06). The same procedure applies for all the other values ("Shape Dynamics" and "Other Dynamics"). With these changes done we will see how the

Fig07

opacity and size of our brush changes, as well
as the drawing angle.

In Fig07 and Fig08 we can appreciate how I
have used this brush in my illustrations.   We
can see clearly how the hair on the monster,
and the background and the skin, were done
with it. This brush is going to be really useful to
mix colours without using the Smudge tool. It
mixes them so softly, it's like spreading butter
over our screen (oo-ooh!).

Fig08

Fig09

Now for the Skin/Textured Brush. . .

The next brush we are going to create will be a more 'artistic' brush, and it's going to be useful for our textures or our monsters. In this case, I choose a random tree texture (Fig09). We are going to follow the exact same steps that we used for the creation of the hair brush, and then we will switch the final values on the brush.
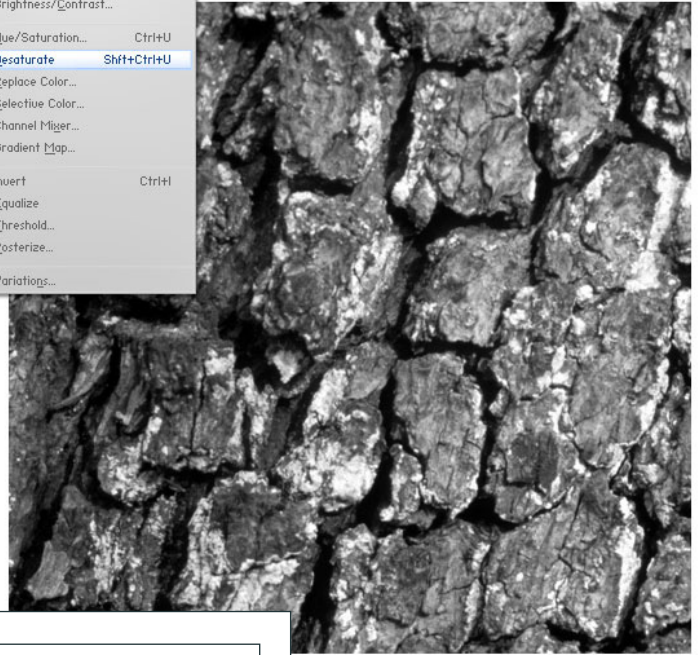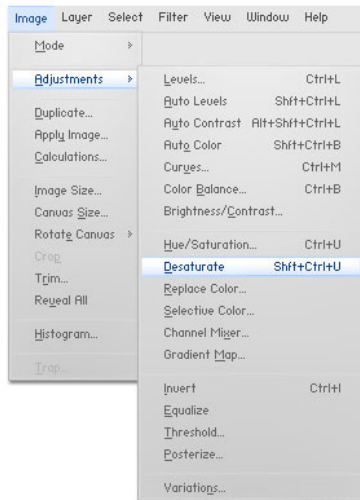
Fig10
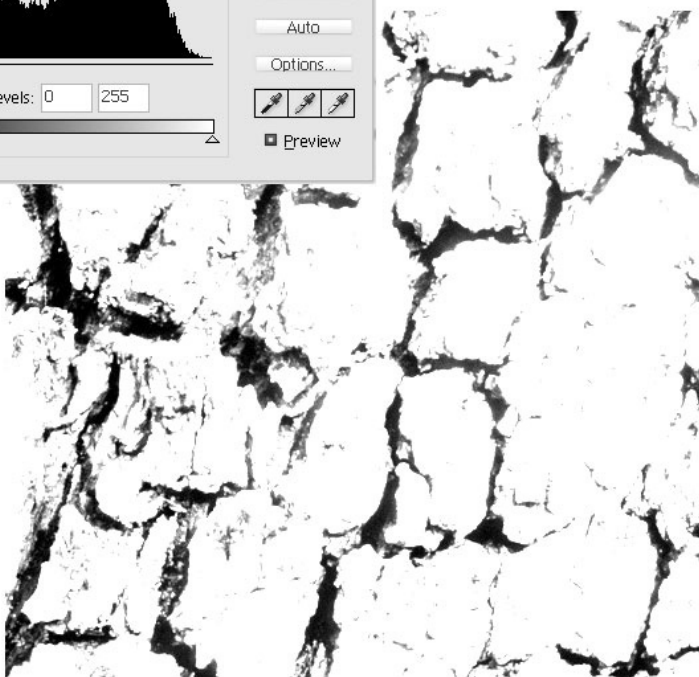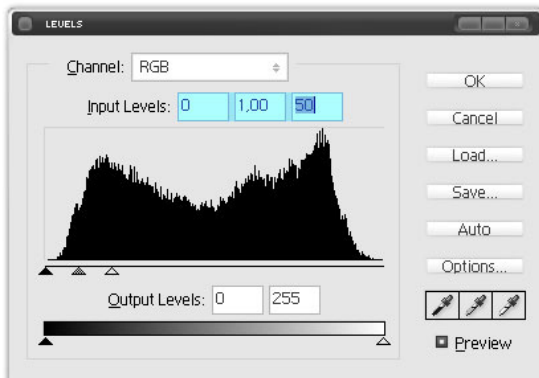
Fig11
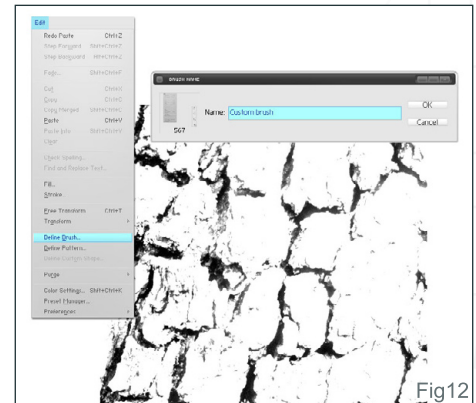
Fig12

Let's review the steps quickly:

Step 1: Desaturate the picture (Ctrl + Shift + U) (Fig10);

Step 2: Contrast our picture with the Levels option (Ctrl + L) (Fig11);

Step 3: We define our brush and give it a name (make it a good one!) (Edit > Define Brush) (Fig12);

Step 4: We modify the brush values, like on Fig13;

Step 5: We save our brush (please don't forget this one!)

As you can see from the previous image, the values that I changed on this brush were the Size and Angle. I recommend using these values only as a guide; the main idea of this tutorial is to encourage you to play with these values and to discover new brushes. Once you modify these values, we need to do the following to save our precious brush: right-click on the document in which we are painting and select the "New Brush" option. **Remember:** this step

Fig13

Fig14

Fig15
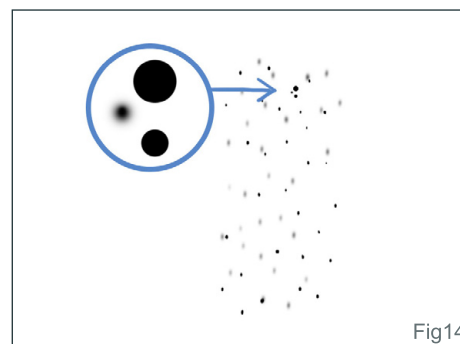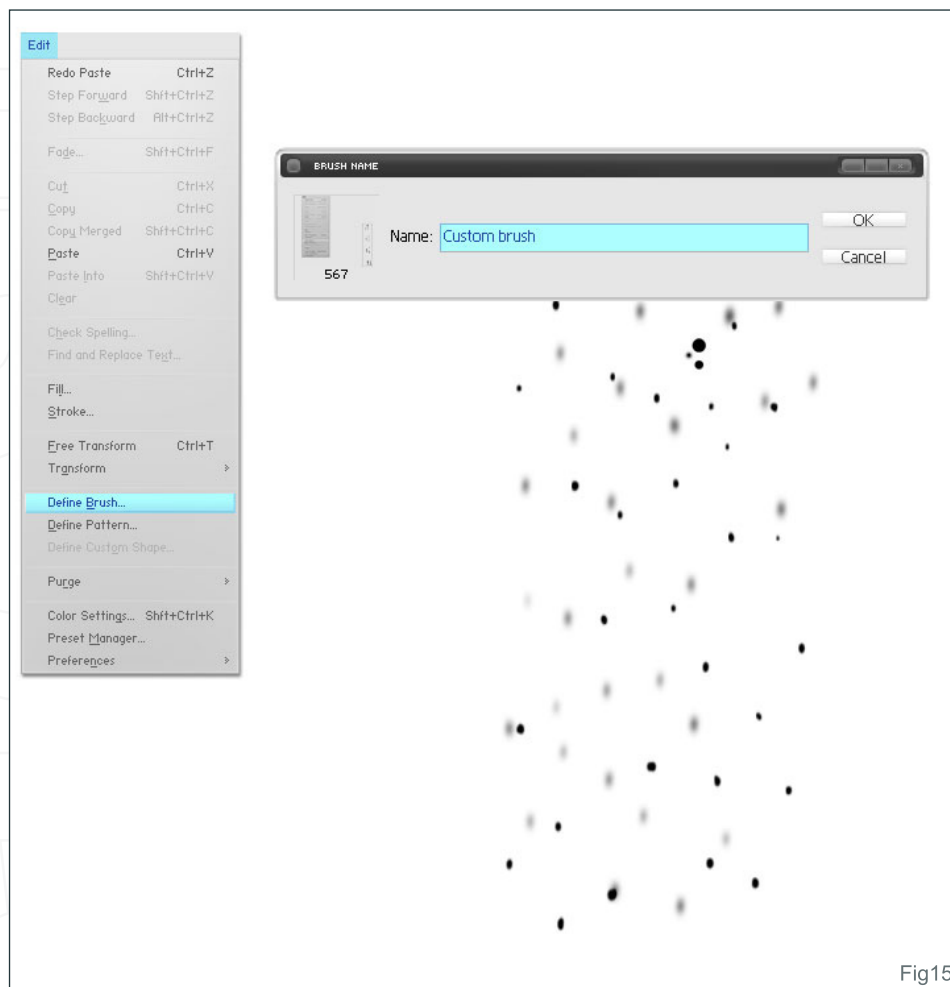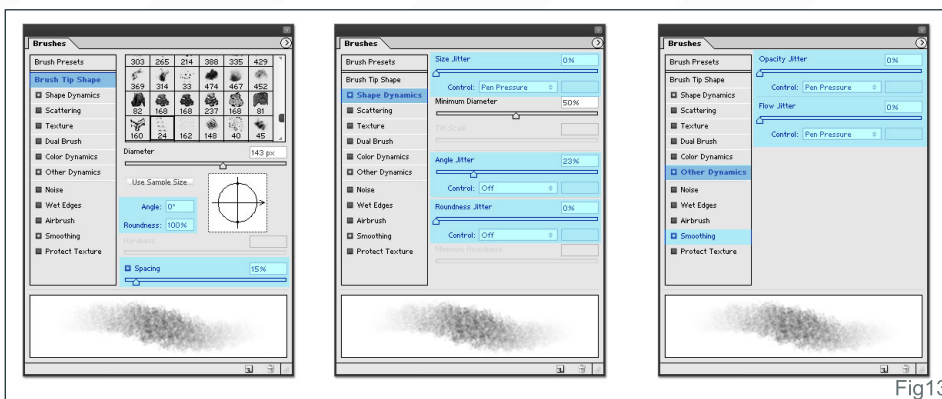
is very important in order to save the values you previously modified!

Finally, our last brush is simply a variant of the good, and old, 'hair' brush that we created first of all in this tutorial, but without using a base texture. In this case, we will create a texture ourselves, in Photoshop! We select a Hard Round Brush and paint dots of different sizes over a new blank document (Ctrl + N). Then we select a Soft Round Brush and paint new dots, as you can see in Fig14. We define the brush (Fig15) with the "Define Brush" option and switch the values in the same way we have done in Fig16. On this last brush, the Spacing value is set on 1%. Depending on your computer, the complexity of this brush value can slow down the performance a little, so be careful!
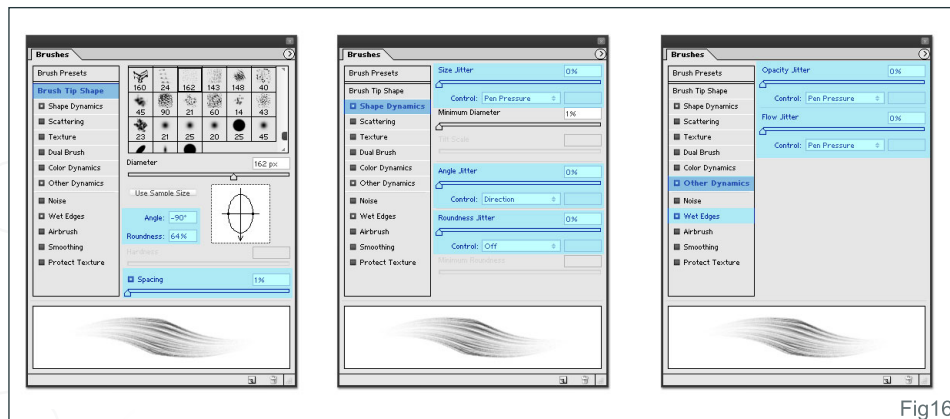
And that's all there is to it!

Carlos Cabrera

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sayhi@carloscabrera.com.ar

Fig16

ELEMENTS

Digital Painting Downloadable Tutorial Series

Introduction:

The 'elements' series is a 70 page guide to 2D Digital painting and can be followed in most software packages supporting paintbrushes and layers. With in this downloadable PDF E-Book we have choosen some of the most used aspects of digital painting and asked 2 or 3 professional artists to cover a specific theme or 'element', resulting in 2 or 3 different styles and techniques which can be viewed side by side.
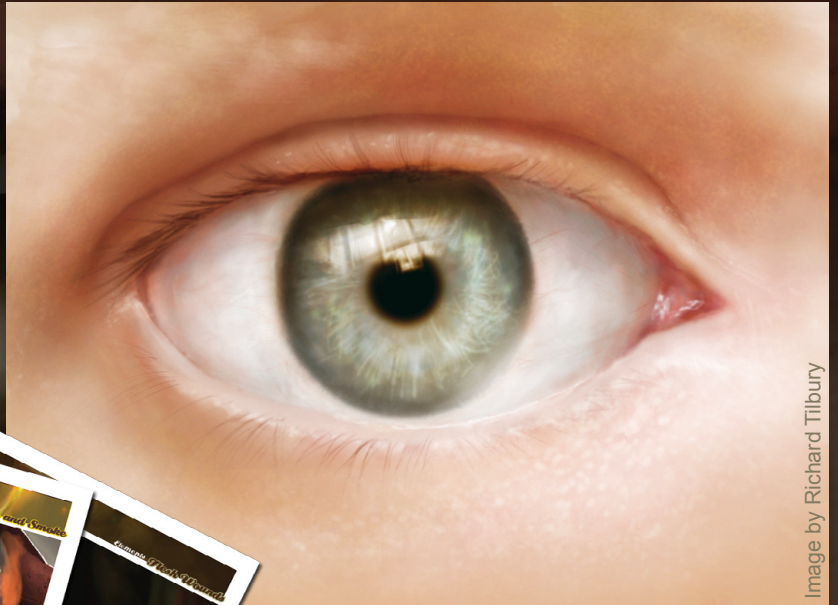
Image by Richard Tilbury

Image by Chris Thunig

ELEMENTS
DIGITAL PAINTING TUTORIAL SERIES : VOLUME ONE

ELEMENTS
DIGITAL PAINTING TUTORIAL SERIES : VOLUME TWO

Volume 1:

Chapter 1: Painting Eyes
Chapter 2: Painting Fabric
Chapter 3: Painting Fire & Smoke
Chapter 4: Painting Flesh Wounds
Chapter 5: Painting Fur & Hair

Volume 2:

Chapter 1: Painting Rock & Stone
Chapter 2: Painting Sky
Chapter 3: Painting Skin
Chapter 4: Painting Trees
Chapter 5: Painting Water

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Welcome to the Speed Painting section of the magazine. We've asked two artists this month to produce a speed painting based on a simple, one-line brief. Here we feature the final paintings and the overview of the creation processes.

This month our talented artists, **Emrah Elmasli** and **Nathanel West,** tackle the topic:

ALIEN
HOT AIR
BALLOONS

EMRAH ELMASLI

Introduction:

Okay, this month's topic is "Alien hot air balloons". When they first told me about the topic, the scene that I'm going to paint was already in my mind. So, I feel comfortable about what I'm going to do. I did some thumbnail sketches and those were enough for me to start.
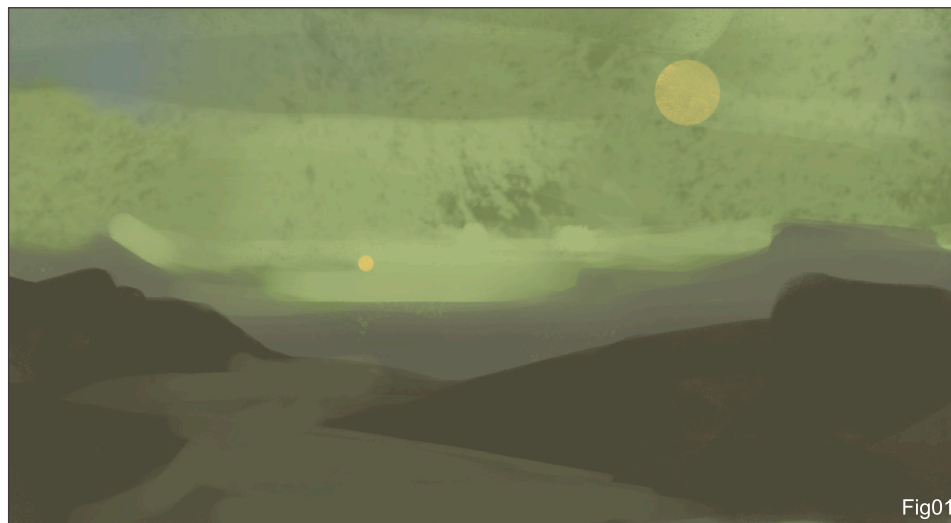
Fig01
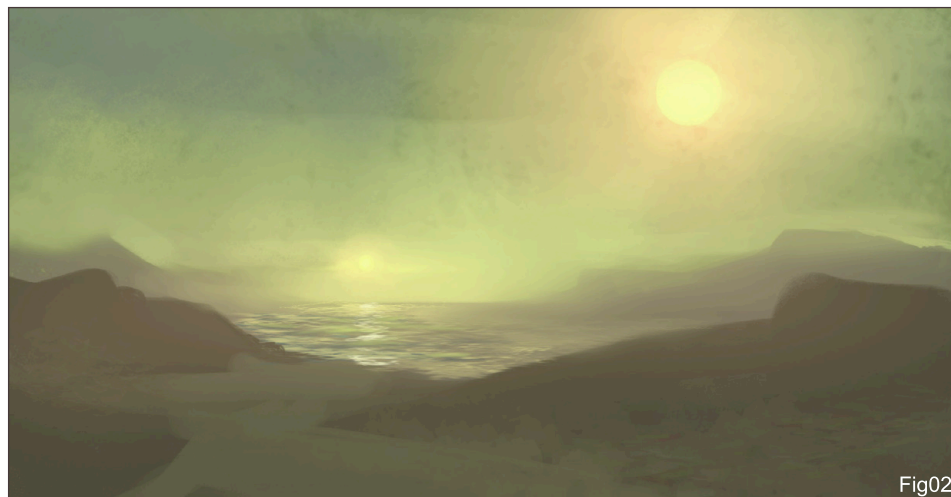
Fig02

Step 1:

I want to finish this painting in 90 minutes – maybe less than that, but not more. Before starting to paint a "speedy", I suggest you set a time limit for yourself. This helps you not to over detail your work and lose time.

I'll use Photoshop CS3 for the entire painting process. I open a new 2200 x 1200 pixel canvas and create a new layer. The scene that I'm going to paint will be an alien-ish world, but I don't want it to be so different from earth. So, some minor changes will do. First thing to do is to determine the colours. Green and yellow sounds cool. Now, let's block them in. I always use large, textured brushes when I'm blocking colours, so I'll do the same this time. By using yellow, green and grey, I quickly create the background and foreground. I want to have two light sources in the scene so I put two suns in the green, alien sky. So that's it for this step! Let's now go more into detail (Fig01).

Step 2:

I open a new layer and set it to "Color Dodge" from the blending mode tab. Now I grab a soft

round brush and glow both of the suns with a saturated, dark orange colour. This gives the soft atmosphere I need. Now I can start putting some details in. I use some textured and scattered brushes to create the water effect on the background, and some hard brushes for the rocky feel in the foreground (Fig02).

Step 3:

For this step I continue to add details with my custom brushes. I also need some contrast in my painting, so I open a "Curves" adjustment layer and bend the curve to gain some contrast. I do this a lot when I'm painting. I always start with light colours and darken them in the process. I also made some changes on the colours by opening a new "Color Balance" adjustment layer. I added some blue to the shadows, which makes the painting even richer in colour (Fig03).

Step 4:

I can hear you asking, "Where is the balloon dammit?" Well, it's time. I start painting in the alien balloons with a hard-edged brush. I want them to have arms like squids and glowing from inside. Keep in mind that you can always glow

Fig03

Fig04

anything you want by opening a new layer and setting it to "Color Dodge" or "Linear Dodge", then painting in with a dark saturated colour. My alien balloons are now hovering and glowing (Fig04).

Final:

For the final step I just paint some more details in and add more contrast by "Curves", again. For the final touch, I paint in two figures with red staffs in their hands. I think they are aliens too, but I don't care because the speedy is finished! 90 minutes!! Thank you for reading!

Emrah Elmasli

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www.partycule.com

Or contact them at:

emrah@partycule.com

NATHANIEL WEST

Step 1:

For this speed painting I began to sketch freely, with no preconceived notions, and waited to see what would come out about. After a short time of messing around with different shapes and values, I began to see a vision of a large balloon coming towards a foreground destination. In my mind, I view air balloons as very tranquil, so the scene began to take on that quality.

When first starting a piece I begin by laying in a rough greyscale sketch. It is very important to have a good value structure first and foremost, with values grouped together to create a graphic and dynamic piece. I would say that this is the single most important stage in a painting, and should be worked out before beginning with colour. If your value structure works, then the rest of the painting will follow easily, but if your

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

value structure is off then you will find the next stages of the painting to be hopeless efforts until the value structure has been corrected. Many times, a painting is not dynamic simply because the lights and darks are not pushed enough, thus resulting in a 'flat' appearance (Fig01).

Step 2:

Now that my values are worked out, I proceed on to glazing colour over the entire painting. This can be subtle or extreme, but either way I glaze the whole painting with one colour to keep the palette unified. Then I begin to add additional colour variations and levels of saturation to develop the piece further. I am always careful to maintain the value structure throughout this stage (Fig02).

Step 3:

Now that the overall palette of the painting has

Fig04

Fig05

been established, I begin to further develop some details. I add in the balloon portion of the hot air balloon, and then mirror it with the same colour and shape in the upper right corner. I also add a couple of figures and decide to add in that same colour and shape language. This is all in efforts to tie the balloon and the foreground together, from a story standpoint.

At first I had indicated some trails of smoke coming off of the ground, but decided to get rid of them so as not to disrupt the landscape too much. The sky begins to get tightened up, along with the mountains (Fig03).

Step 4:

I continue detailing the landscape further, introducing textures and colour washes to achieve the desired effect. The air balloon changes quite a bit, and its design begins to take shape. I also introduce additional colour shifts into the sky, as well (Fig04).

Step 5:

I now focus solely on the balloon, as that is our main focus. I give it a bit of loose detail, and blend it into the environment with some ambient lighting on the outer edges of the balloon (Fig05).

Step 6:

I now add in additional details to the landscape and foreground. Once done with all detailing, I put some rays of light coming through the clouds, hit a couple areas with some highlights, and push the contrast in some areas to make the scene a touch more dramatic. I add in some highlights on the edge of the foreground to help separate it from the landscape, and call this painting done (Fig06).

Nathaniel West

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WEST Fig06

ELEMENTS

Digital Painting Tutorial Series : Weather

ELEMENTS
SNOWSTORM

Created In:
Adobe Photoshop 7

Snowstorm

In this tutorial I will show you how to create a snowstorm from the first to the last stroke. We need some specific steps to transform this painting; one of these steps is to add to the snow - a lot of it! The next step is to change the Color Balance to blue, and finally add some fog. You can follow these steps or you can create your own, unique way. Please use this method only as a guide or for reference, rather than a rigid way of doing things (Fig00 – base image).

Create a new layer and start painting the snow. Use a blue/grey colour for the snow. I used these colours: RGB 84,112,126 for shadows, and RGB 113,140,157 for the highlights. Please try your own palette: you can even use a photograph of some snow for reference, if you like.

Paint, with fast strokes, the shape of the snow and cover all the grass that you see in the

Fig00
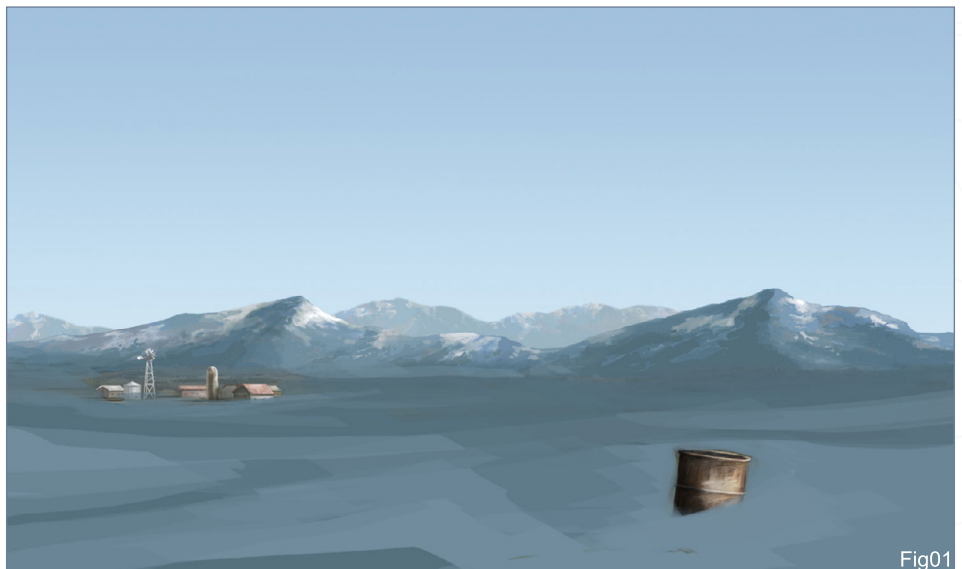
Fig01
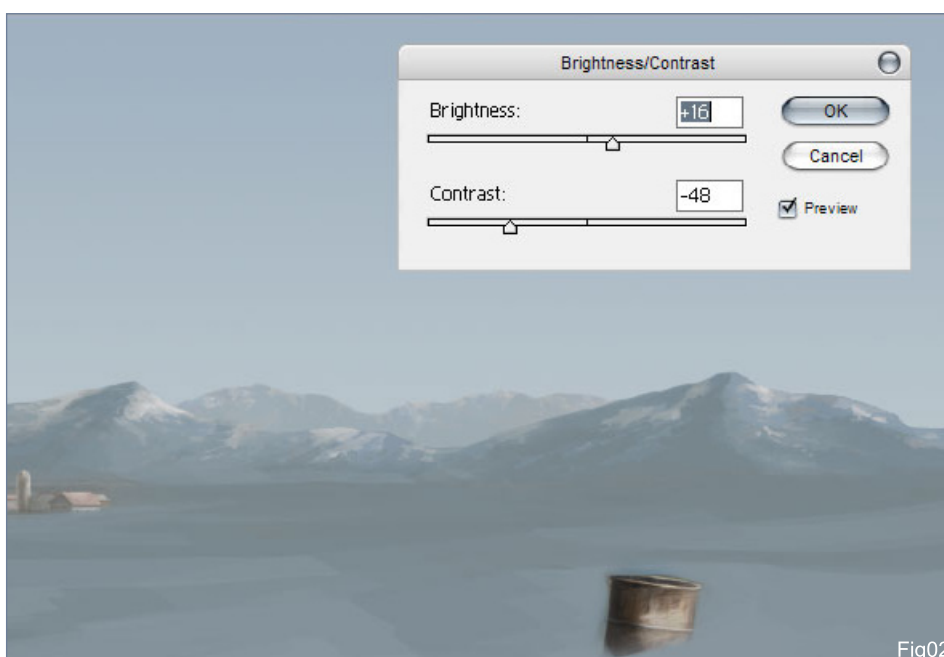
Fig02

picture (Fig01). This is a quick step, so don't waste too much time on it - we will add more details later on.

Change the Brightness and Contrast of the whole image. I used these settings: Brightness +16; Contrast -48 (Fig02). Can you see how the complete image came into a different atmosphere with just a few colour tweaks? Well this is just the beginning!

The next step is to change the atmospheric colour to blue. To do this, create a new layer and fill it with this colour: RGB 161,173,197. Change the layer's properties to Color 100% and check your new atmospheric colour.

Fig03

Now let's smooth the snow a little bit, on the ground. Create another layer and start painting with a soft round brush at 50% opacity. Try to use the Eye-dropper tool a lot - this is very important, and please do not use the Smudge tool in this case!

Create another layer and paint the fog on the horizon, with a brighter blue colour. Use a soft round brush at 30% opacity, for this (Fig03).

Let's put more fog in the sky, now. On another layer (Normal layer; 82% opacity), paint with this blue colour (RGB 127, 184, 208) and try to merge the mountains with the sky. The new atmosphere looks very good, don't you think? So let's continue...

With a good brush, now you can paint some more detailed snow. You can spend much more time on this step, because we need a good-looking snow environment!

Fig04

Foreground to Transparent gradient

Fig05

Fig06

Fig07
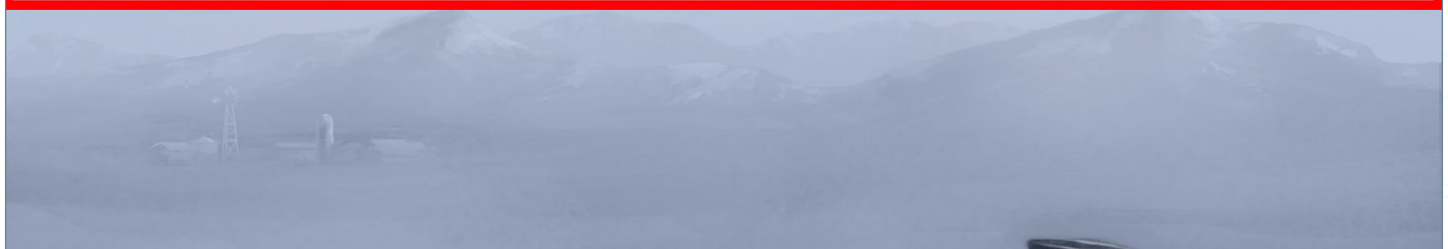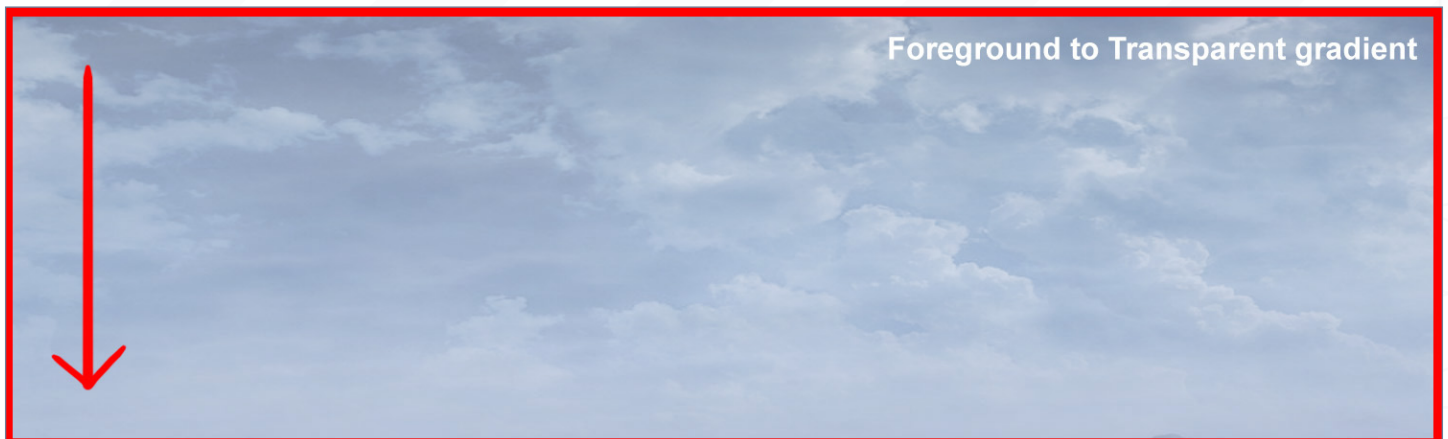
On another new layer, paint the clouds using shades of grey, and change the properties of this layer to Overlay at 85% opacity (Fig04).

You can use a photograph for the clouds, but remember that the photograph must be greyscale, because we don't want to change the blue/grey colour from our own sky.

But now we have a problem... The sky is too bright to be a stormy sky! So let's fix this really quickly. Create another layer and fill it with a gradient. Use the colour RGB 81,91,103, and change the layer's opacity to 48%. Don't fill the whole image with the gradient, just the upper middle section (Fig05).

Now is the time to add some snowflakes. Create a new layer and fill it with black paint. Paint random dots onto it in a grey colour (RGB: 128,128,128). You can paint the snowflakes one by one, you can make a custom brush, or you can duplicate the layer (Ctrl + J) and change the opacity to simulate distant snowflakes. When you paint the dots, use different sizes of brushes, too (Fig06). And

pay attention! Change the properties of the layer to Color Dodge and find a good opacity level - I used 78% opacity, but see what is better for your own painting. You can see how the black is gone now, with the Color Dodge property, and the white is now there. Well, those white dots are our snowflakes! But they still need some adjustments. The snowflakes need Motion Blur, so go to Filter > Motion Blur and set these parameters: Angle 20; Distance 25 pixels, and then add a Gaussian Blur (3%), too. To increment the snowflake effect, you can duplicate the layer and transform it a couple of times and obtain an image such as Fig07.

Now it's time to add some little tweaks and the image is then done. We need to put more attention to the trash can in the foreground, and the farm in the background. To do this, create another layer (Overlay; opacity 77%) and fill it again with the Gradient tool and the colour RGB 58, 60, 66, from the top right corner to the left corner. Now, on another layer, paint the windows from the farm in orange. Add
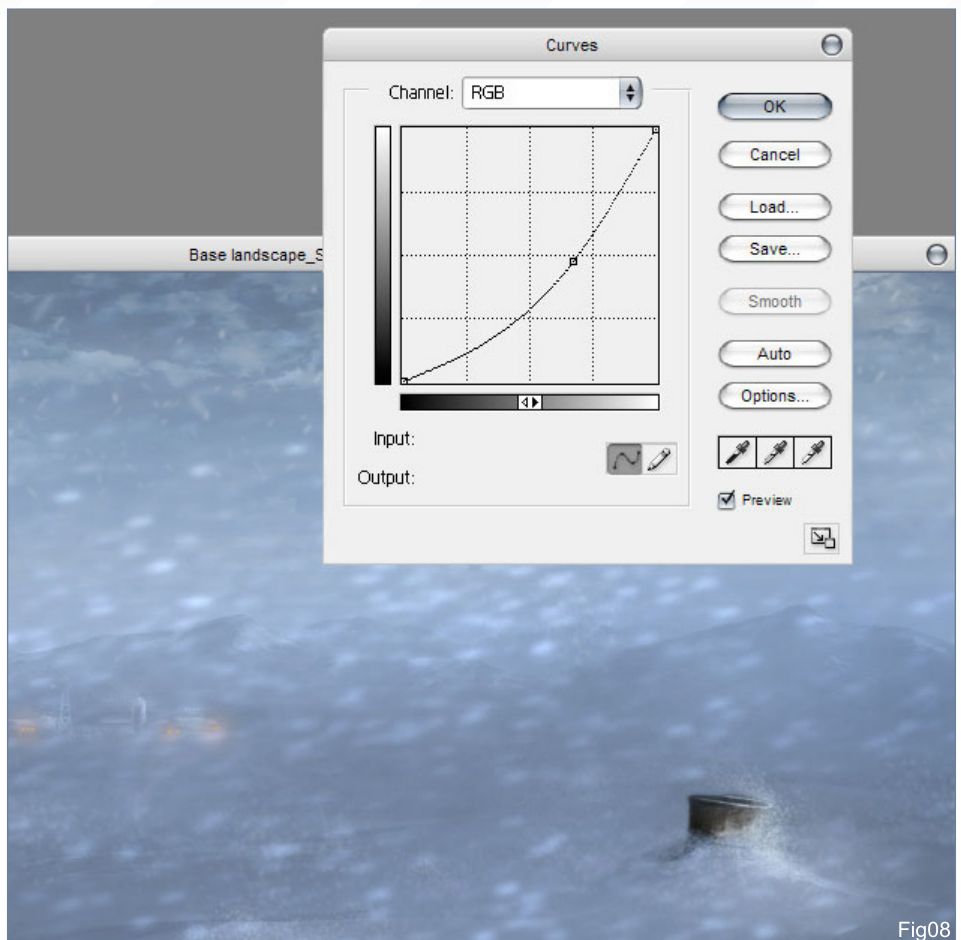
Fig08

another layer with Soft Light properties, and set the opacity to 68%. Play with this last layer to change the amount of light coming from the windows.

In this final step you can add whatever you want, just use your imagination! For the final layer I painted, with a soft round brush, some more fog onto the horizon, and the final colour tweak was a Curve adjustment. So, open the Curves pop-up menu (Ctrl + M) and enter these settings: input 172; output 120 (Fig08).

If you want to, you can paint more snow on the trash can and maybe add some more snowflakes to the scene. Use all of your skills in this final step and add more details. When you feel that the image is done, save it and upload it to your portfolio! You can see how I added more snow detail on the ground and mountains in the final image; I did this with several low opacity strokes in the dark area of the snow.

Remember to practice all the time! And please feel free to send me your results or comments to my e-mail address, as I'd love to see your progress!

Previous month: *Rainstorm*
Next month: *Heat Waves*

Carlos Cabrera

For more from this artist visit:
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"Taking a look back in time, I remember that I had problems using Painter first, too. And the fact that there weren't many good tutorials around didn't make things any easier! ..."

LEARN HOW TO WORK WITH
PAINTER
IN 12 EASY STEPS ANNE PAGODA

From creating hair to painting kissable lips, Anne Pagoda brings us another tutorial, but this time she's going back to basics, in Painter....

Learn How To Work With PAINTER In 12 Easy Steps!

Created In: Painter

Introduction:

Some, or most of you may be familiar with the following situation... There, you've finally got yourself Painter, but you don't have a clue how to go about using it! The brushes won't obey your commands, and besides that you don't really have a clue about how the interface of this software seems to work, even though it all seems so easy while glancing at it. Well, that's why I have decided to set up a bunch of Painter tutorials, because I have come across so many people asking me how to control it. Most seem to have problems with the control of the brushes, and may feel a bit swamped with the huge collection of them; perhaps they're just not sure which one to take or which will fit their purposes best. Taking a look back in time, I remember that I had problems using Painter first, too. And the fact that there weren't many good tutorials around didn't make things any easier!

That's why, in this first tutorial, we'll take a look at the interface of Painter and I'll mark
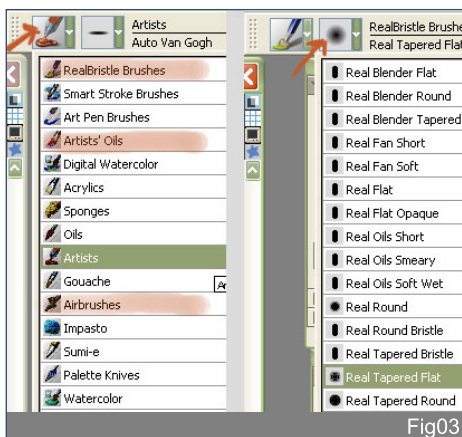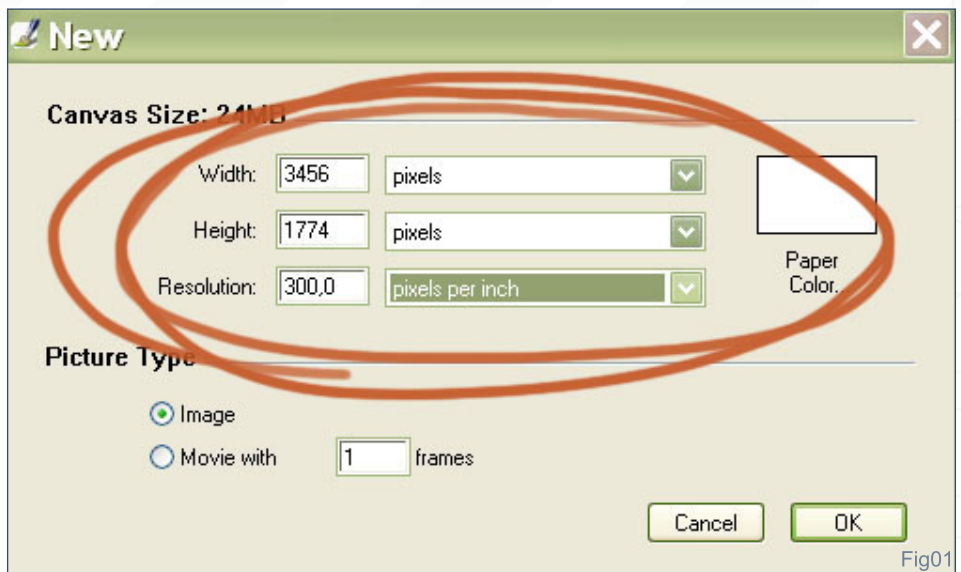
Fig03
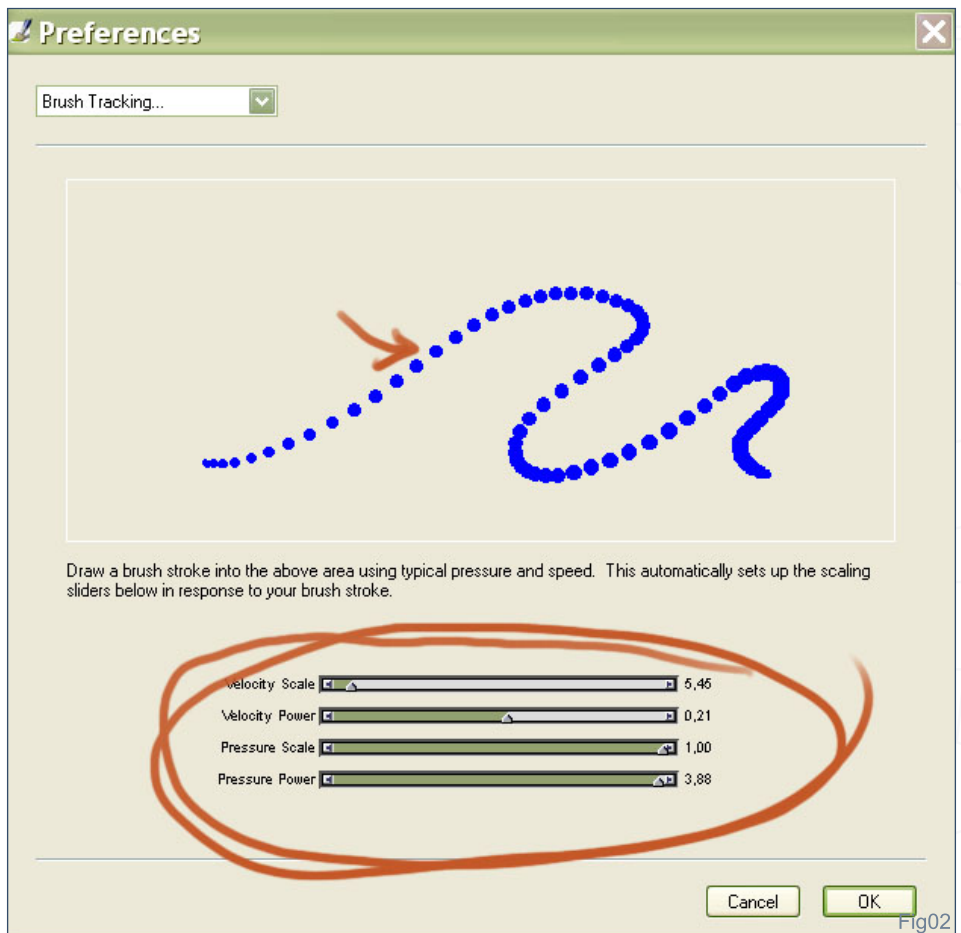
out everything which is important to paint a not-too-complex landscape for your first Painter experience. So let's get started...

Step 1: We Need a Canvas

First of all, you'll need to create a new canvas to paint on. Go to File > New (or press Ctrl + N) to create a new canvas. Choose it to be

Fig01

Fig02

3456 pixels wide and 1774 pixels high (which should be 29 x 15cm (or 11 x 5 inches)), at a resolution of 300 pixels per inch. Painter also allows you to customise your canvas before you start painting, like giving it a certain colour or giving it this or that paper structure. Choosing a certain structure for the paper will influence the behaviour of the brushes you apply to it,

but don't worry; this is something we don't need right now because we will use a brush to fill our canvas with a basic colour later on (Fig01).

Step 2: Pre-defining Painter

Okay, now you have this shiny and beautiful new white canvas, so let's start painting! But wait: there is something else which is pretty useful and should be done first when you are using Painter for the first time... Check the Edit menu > Preferences > Brush tracking, and scribble a little on the now offered scratch board. This will help Painter to obey to the movements you are giving to it; for example it will obey your personal brush strokes better and more precisely (Fig02).

Step 3: Our Brushes of Choice

In Fig03, I have marked a selection of brushes for you which were used for this tutorial. The Real Bristle brushes (new in Painter 10, but can also be easily replaced with the Artists' Oils), the Artists' Oils and the Airbrushes. Looking at the brushes you have two little windows: the left one defines if you have a Real Bristle brush, an Airbrush, or an Art Pen brush, etc... As soon as a brush is chosen, for instance a Real Bristle brush, you can do a click into the right window to chose whether it's supposed to be a Real Tapered Flat or a Real Fan Soft Bristle Brush. Of course, this offers endless variety in your
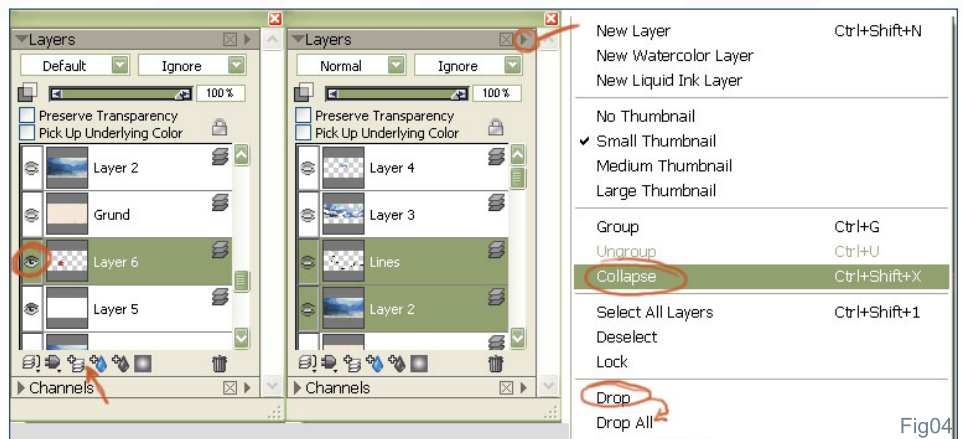

Fig04
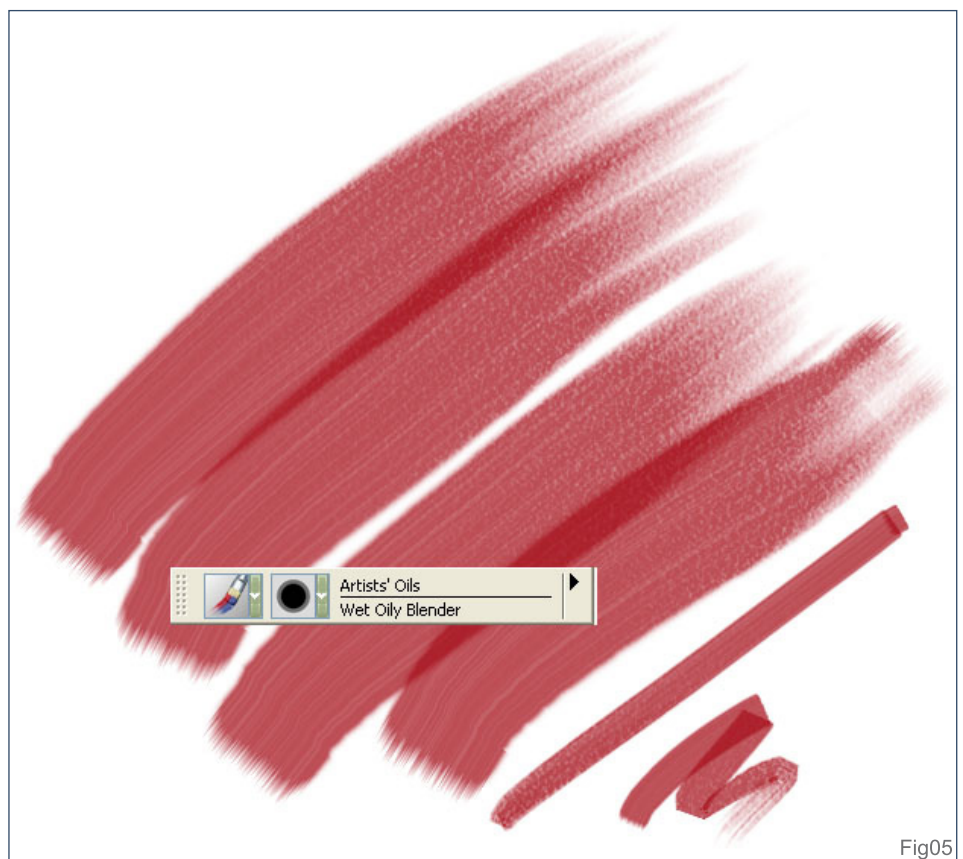
Fig05

Fig06

way of working, but don't worry; for our painting we will not work with more than two different settings for each brush that we're using.

Step 4: The Layers

Now we finally want to give the canvas a basic colour, but before we can do so I want you to create a new layer. There is a little symbol on the layers window (marked with a red arrow on Fig04) which will create a new layer once you click it. The little eye to the left of a layer marks whether it's visible, or not. Hitting the trash can icon will delete the layer you're currently

using, whilst hitting the pop-up menu will give you many extra options for the layer which is currently selected. Merging two layers into one works a bit differently in Painter to Photoshop. Here you can group, collapse or drop layers. For our purpose, it might be good to know that having two layers marked, and then choosing the "collapse" option from the pop up window, will make them into one. The "drop" option drops the chosen layer directly onto the canvas, whilst "drop all" basically merges all layers into one: the canvas.

Step 5: Finally! Some Colour for the Canvas

For the background I chose a soft pink to enrich the colour palette, but in our example I have painted some reddish strokes to demonstrate the behaviour of the brush of my choice. I chose the Artists' Oils, Wet Oily Blender, opacity 100 %, in a size of your choice. We will ignore brush settings such as Resat, Bleed and Jitter this time, since these are not needed to be changed for the simple landscape that we are
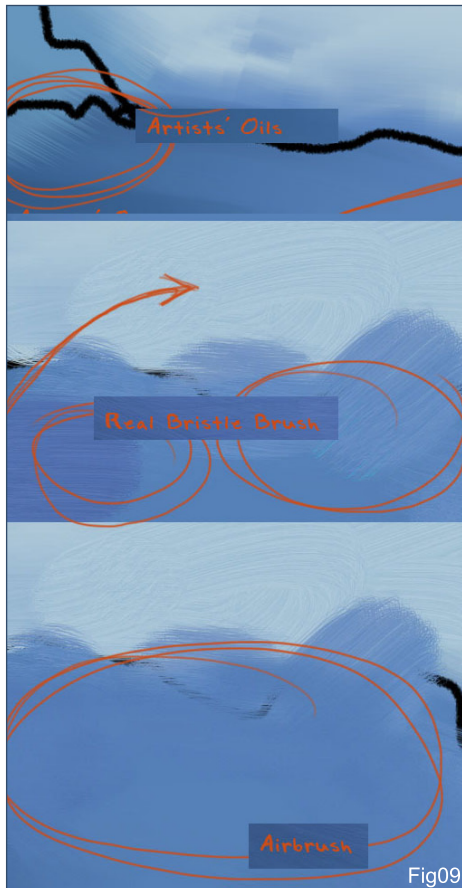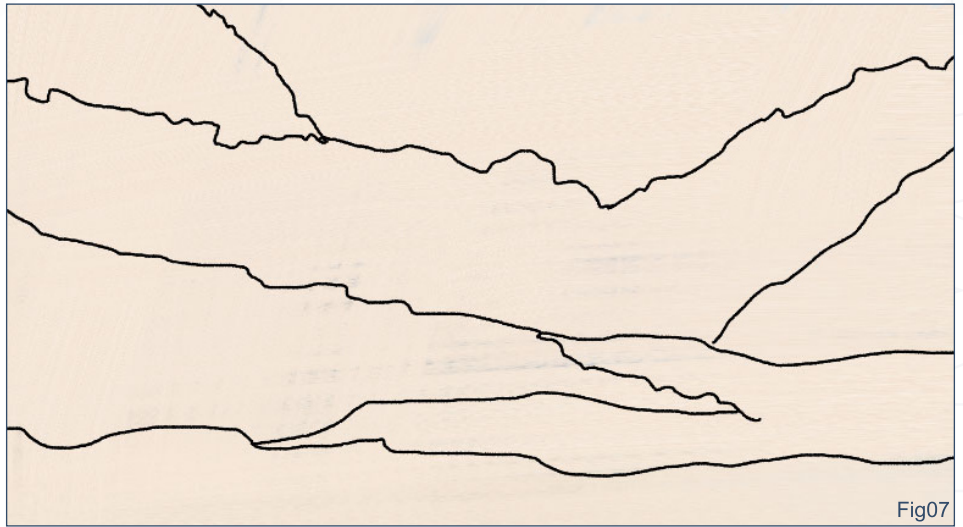

Fig09

Fig07

Artists' Oils
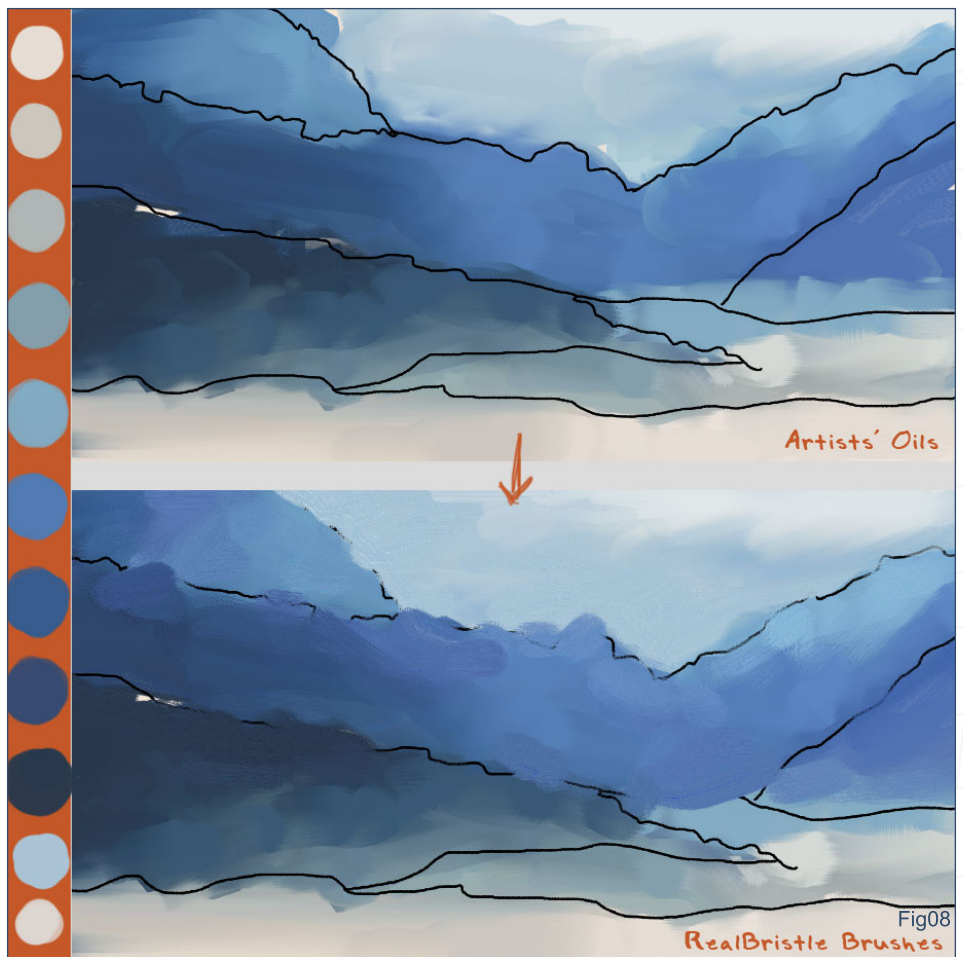
RealBristle Brushes
Fig08

planning to paint for practice, in this tutorial. Once applied, the Artists' Oils create a beautiful texture which gives you a kind of a real brush stroke feeling. The brush will also lose colour the longer you drag it over the canvas, which is why you'll need to work with many little strokes to create a colour which is shiny and powerful (Fig05).

Step 6: Drawing with Painter

To help us navigate ourselves around the canvas, we will draw some outlines for the different areas of the landscape, once we have coloured the canvas with the basic colour. For drawing, I prefer the Pastels brush set to Square Hard Pastel 40, which is shown in Fig06.

Step 7: A Quick Sketch

Now, after creating a new layer and having chosen a small Pastels brush, I sketched in some lines which should help in defining the areas of the landscape that I wish to paint (Fig07).

Step 8: Colour Blocking

For the colour blocking stage, it will be necessary now for you to create a new layer, in case you are aiming for a clean, applied colour. This means that, if you don't create a new layer for working on now, then the colours which are newly painted onto the canvas will react with the colours already applied, and will therefore create some kind of colourful mixed blue paint (which is something we're not aiming for, right now). I have set a little colour palette picker to the left of Fig08 for you, from which you can pick the colours for your practice, in case you have problems finding good ones on your own. When you have made a screen shot and wish to pick a colour from the picker, you can press the Alt key whilst a brush (B - the same as in Photoshop) is selected. This will transform the brush into a pipette symbol, as long as you hold the Alt key pressed. This way, it's easy to grab a colour.
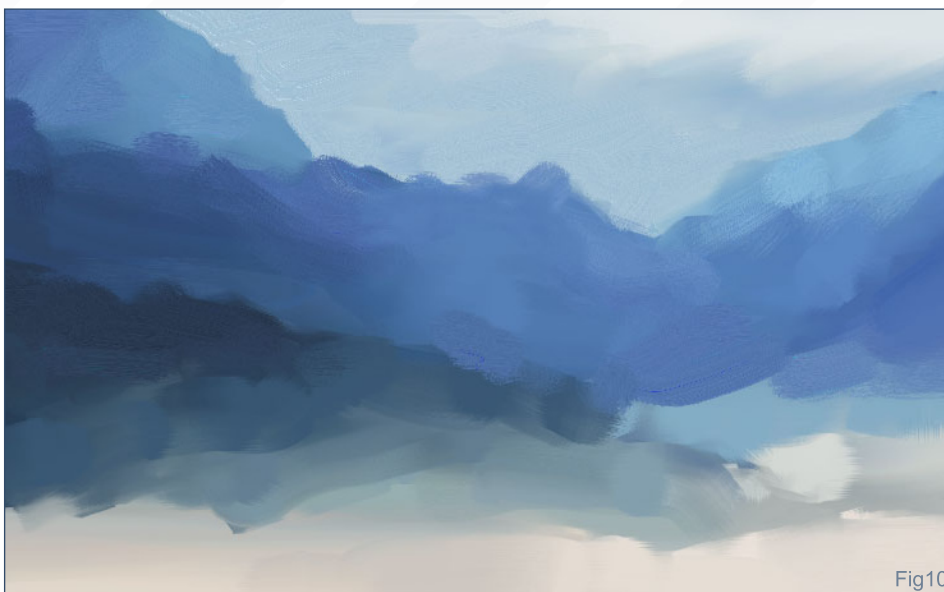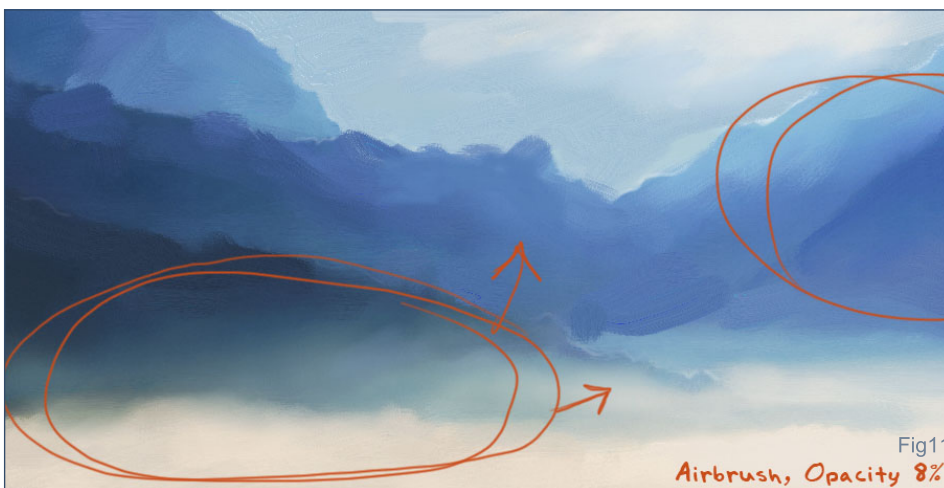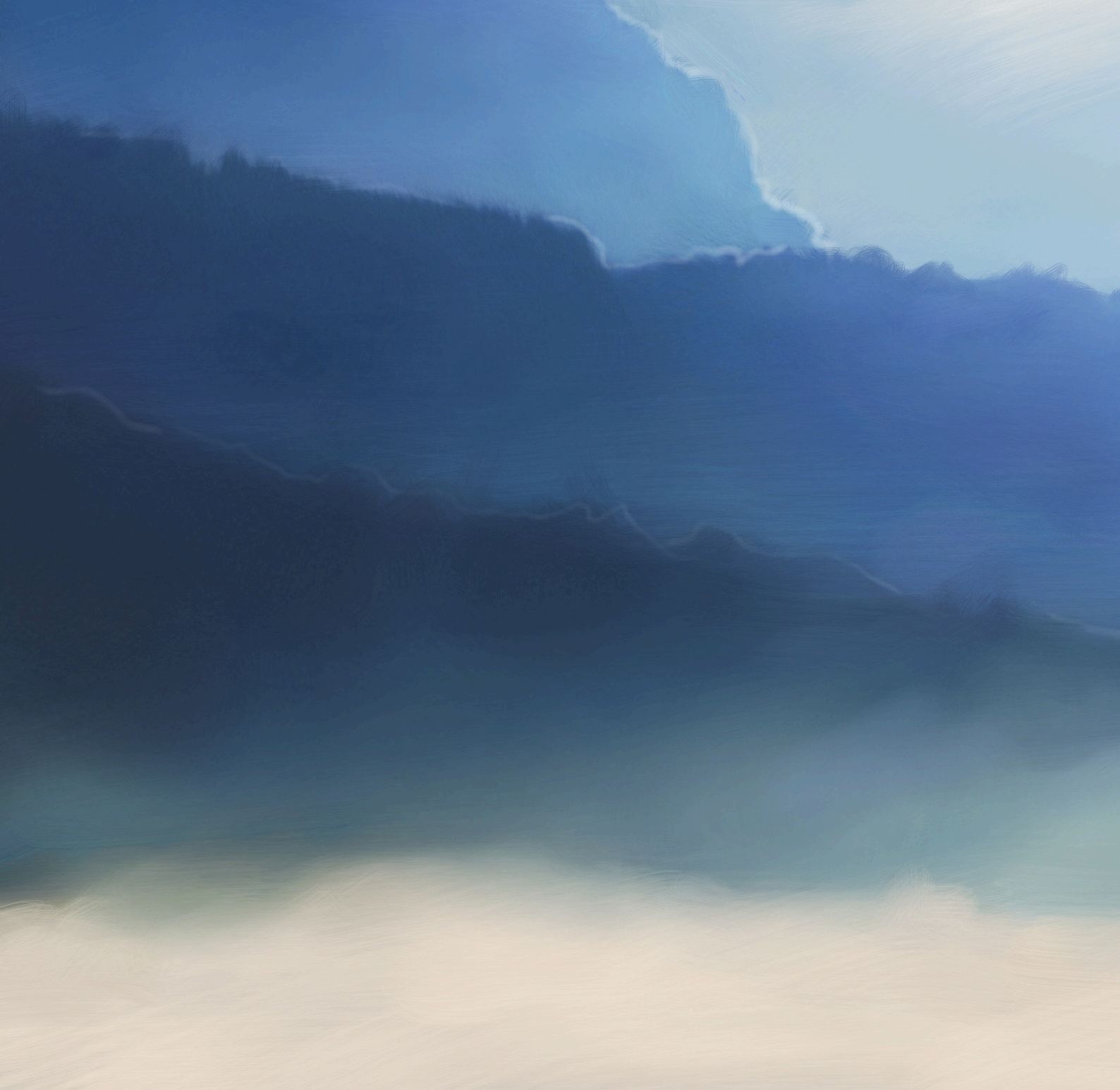

Fig10

Fig11

Airbrush, Opacity 8%

Fig12

After you have applied some basic colour with the Artists' Oils, you can pick a Real Bristle brush (I used the Real Tapered Flat setting) to create some hairy, e.g. fuzzy texture, to your painting. (This is not necessary, since it won't be seen on small resolutions anyway, but if you plan on printing your painting later on, and you fancy the 'natural' look, adding a Real Bristle brush for some extra texture can really give it all a wonderful touch up!)

Step 9: Brush Behaviour Explained

In the following three examples, I have made some large screen shots to demonstrate the different behaviour of all three brushes which were used to create this landscape. The Artists' Oils should apply a rather soft looking, but still painterly, surface which supplies the eye with rich and powerful colour. Whilst the Real Bristle brushes are rather fuzzy and do not really cover all the space which they're applied to, and so are better used after you have worked on your canvas with the Artists' Oils. Last but not least, when you are interested in getting the whole coloured impression - "rounded and softened up" - you might want to take an Airbush after you have worked with the Artists' Oils and/or

the Real Bristle brushes. For such big areas, as seen here, an Airbrush which is set to Soft Airbrush 40 works best (Fig09).

Step 10: It's Colourful!

Fig10 shows what the canvas looked like after I had randomly experimented with the three before-mentioned brushes, and focused myself on getting the colour palette blocked-in in a way that makes sense.

Basically, we are aiming for some sort of blue mountainous setting for the middle part of the painting, some fog on the lower part, and a

sky with some clouds appearing white for the upper part. I have also deleted the outlines layer now, since it was no longer necessary. We have some kind of structure now, so all that now needs to be done is to give it some further definition.

Step 11: Further Definition

What can be easily seen from Fig10 is the randomly applied Bristle brush on an also pretty randomly coloured base, which was applied with the Artists' Oils. To get some definition into this now, it's necessary to reduce the chaotic look of certain areas of the painting. Therefore we use the Airbrush and set it to around 8% opacity. Unlike Photoshop, the Airbrush in Painter reacts quickly to even the slightest tip of your tablet, and so only works precisely if used for refining when set to a really small opacity. In Fig11, I have marked some areas for you which were quite obviously worked over with the airbrush now, to better show the difference to Fig10.

Step 12: Done Already?

Now that was easy, wasn't it? To round the whole picture up, simply pick a small brush from the Artists' Oils and paint in some small, highlighted lines here and there. Combined with some airbrushing on areas where you see fit, this should finally lead us to a nice little landscape painting which might look quite pretty on your desktop (or in your trash can, if you really don't fancy landscapes and saw this just as a general introduction to a potential tool of choice for later) (Fig12).

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Figurative Drawing

part 1

& Foundational Studies Series

Figurative Drawing
& Foundational Studies Series
Part 1

Introduction

Whether you are an advanced or intermediate figurative artist, at some point in time you've undoubtedly come across problems as you've progressed through the creation of an image. This should be of no surprise, since painting or drawing the human form properly is an extremely difficult task to master, and can generally be seen as an exercise in problem solving. How we find solutions to these problems depends on numerous factors; however, overcoming these obstacles can be made less difficult if you have a solid understanding of the basic elements of art. In this three-part foundational studies series, I will provide an overview of these elements, and later we will apply them to create a figure drawing using traditional media in the last segment of the series. Let's get started!

If you take a step back to look at any work of art, you will find that nearly all successful images contain seven essential elements. These elements are as follows: line, shape,
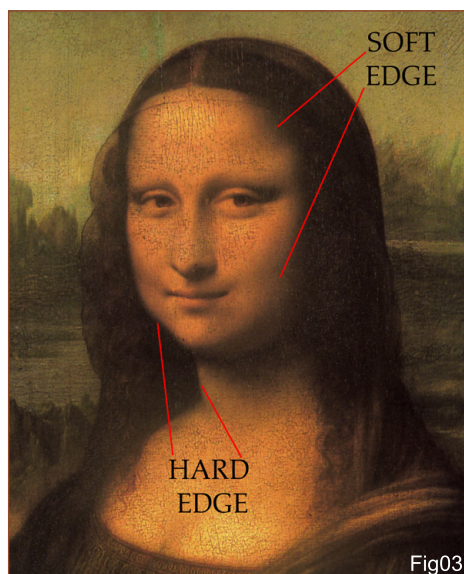
Fig01

Fig02

Fig03
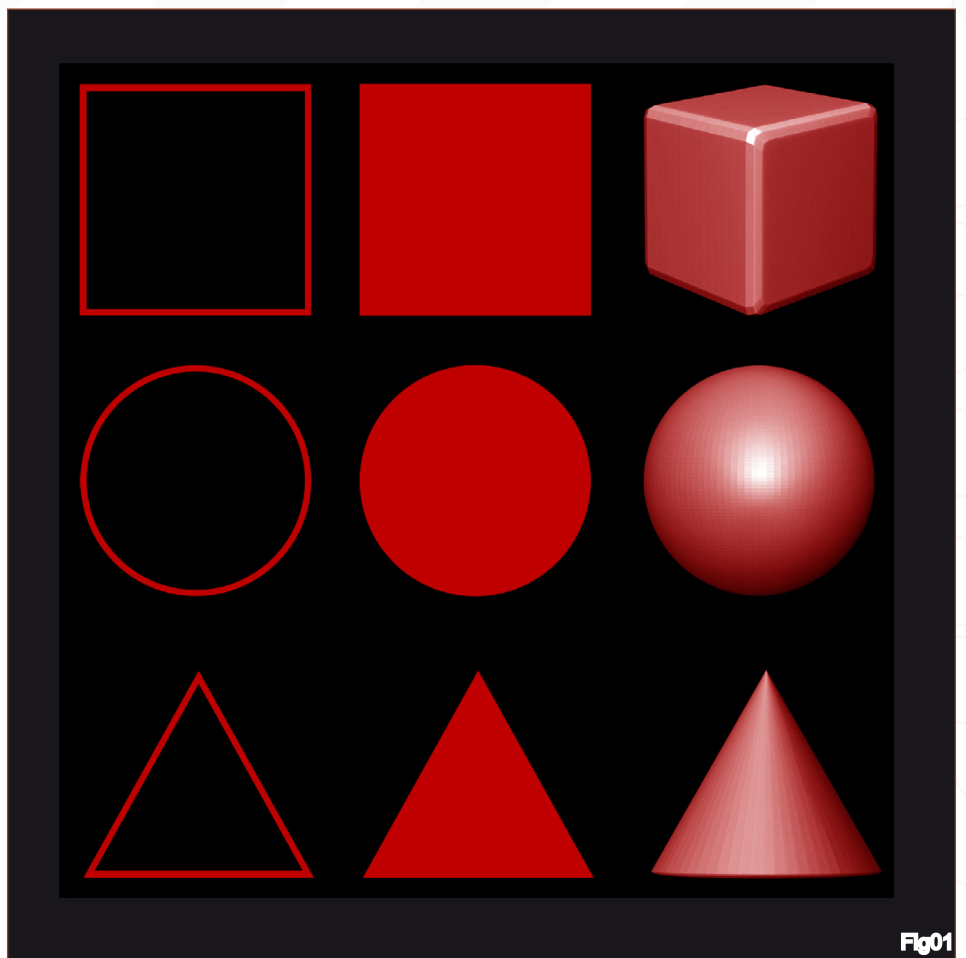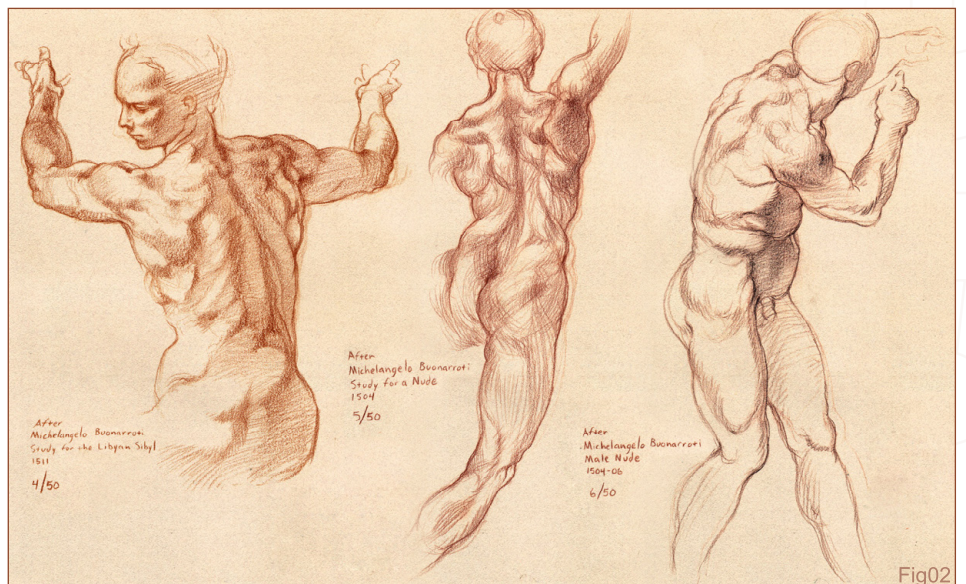
form, space, texture, colour and value. Each of these elements work in concert in such a way that, if one is missing or is executed improperly, problems within an image begin to occur. For the first part of this series, we will take a look at the first three elements: line, shape and form (Fig01).

Line

Line is defined as a continuous extent of length, straight or curved, and often defines the edges of a form. It's important to understand that line doesn't necessarily have to be drawn in a direct fashion (Fig02) in order to be seen.

Line can be implied indirectly when the dark and light areas of a form meet. This is known as a shadow edge and can be seen as either a form shadow, composed of soft edges, or a cast shadow which contains hard edges. An example of this can be seen in works such as Leonardo da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' (Fig03). If you look carefully at the image, you'll notice how line can be perceived without it actually being drawn. The edge where the right side of her neck and cheek meet the shadowed area of her hair, can be perceived as a line because of the intensity of contrasting values. The left area of her face however is defined by soft shadows, making it slightly more difficult to perceive where the transition between light and dark areas begin.

Shape

Shapes are made when lines meet to create self contained areas. These areas can be defined as both organic and geometric and are seen as both positive (the area defined by
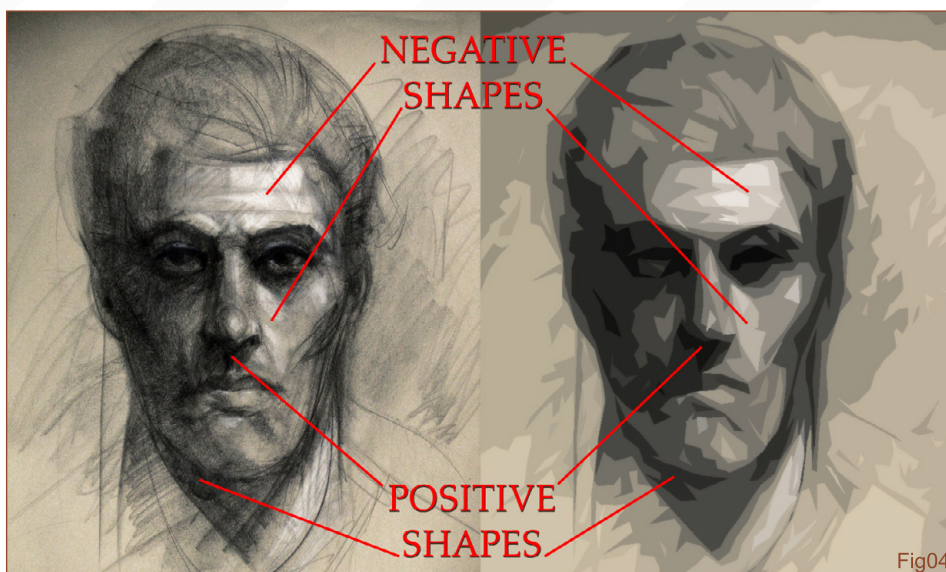
NEGATIVE SHAPES
POSITIVE SHAPES
Fig04

shadow shapes), and negative (the area defined between the shadow shapes) (Fig04 and 05). Thinking about shapes in an abstract sense can sometimes help bring the idea home. I like to think of the positive and negative shapes created by light and shadow as "pieces to a puzzle". Whether I'm creating a figure drawing

or a portrait, what I am essentially trying to do is re-create the shapes that are already there. I understand that these "puzzle pieces" are of a set size and shape, so they can not deviate from these dimensions when I re-create them; if I'm not careful, a slight change in size or dimension of one shape will affect other
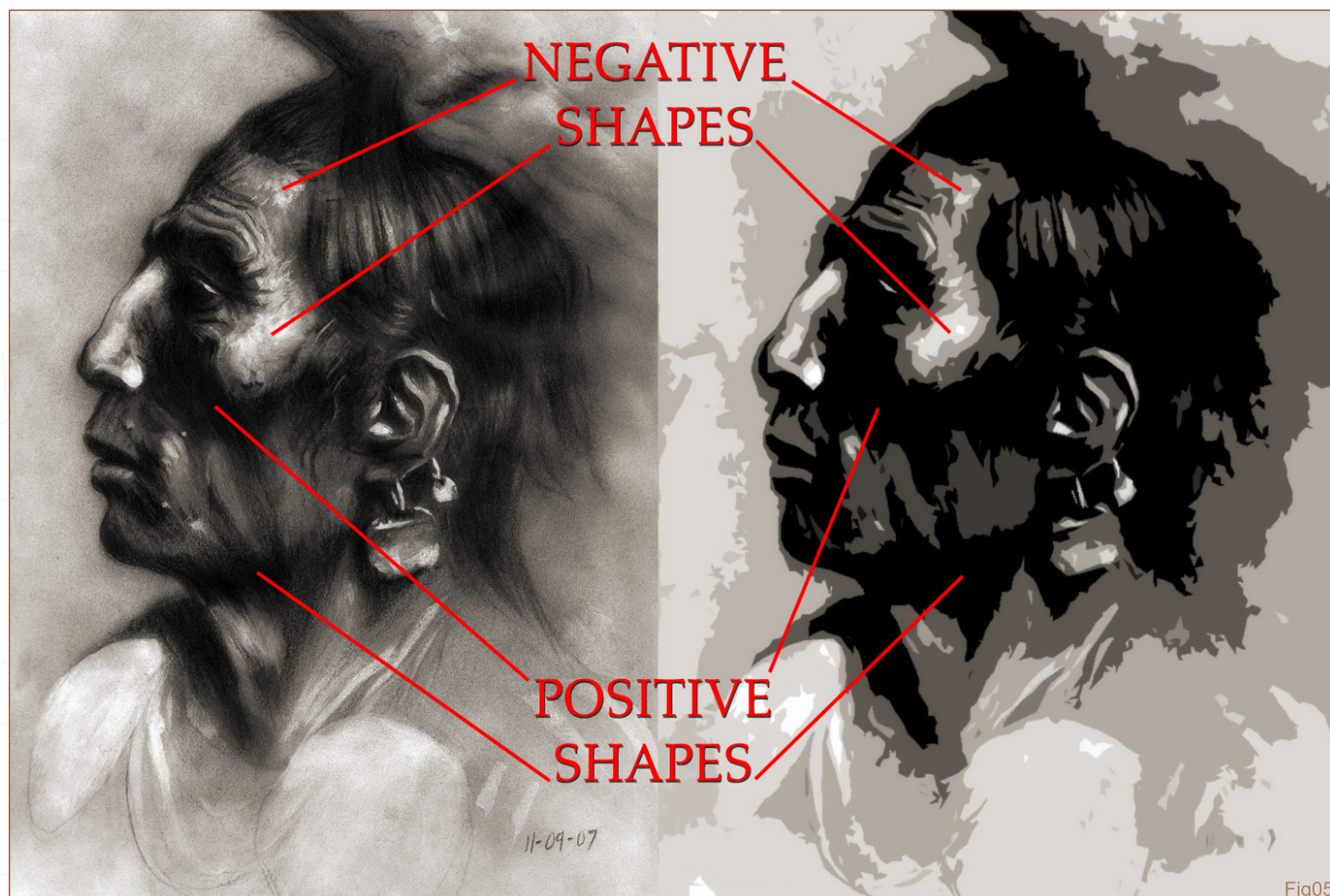
NEGATIVE SHAPES
POSITIVE SHAPES
Fig05

shapes surrounding it, which eventually leads to proportional issues caused by distortion.

Form

When space encloses an area of gradient values that define an object's volume through the presence of light and shadow, form is created. An easier way to understand this is to think of form as shape with tonal value. Form gives us the necessary visual information needed to understand an object's mass, shape and depth. In the examples shown here (Fig06 - 08), you can see how the clarity of defined shapes (in this case polygons) make it easier to comprehend 3-dimensional form. The crisp definition of each polygonal shape in the 3D model to the left, provides all the information needed in order to see the figure's true form. The rough paint over to the right lacks significant detail, making it harder to see the form as it should be. There are simply not enough value shapes to define the form properly. However, the rough does provide one implicit benefit: it simplifies the form. By doing so, we are able to see large areas of light and shadow masses easily, which allows us to better gauge proportion of our tonal shapes. Once the largest shapes are defined, we can then move on to the middle-sized shapes, and finally to the smallest shapes.

Fig06

Fig07
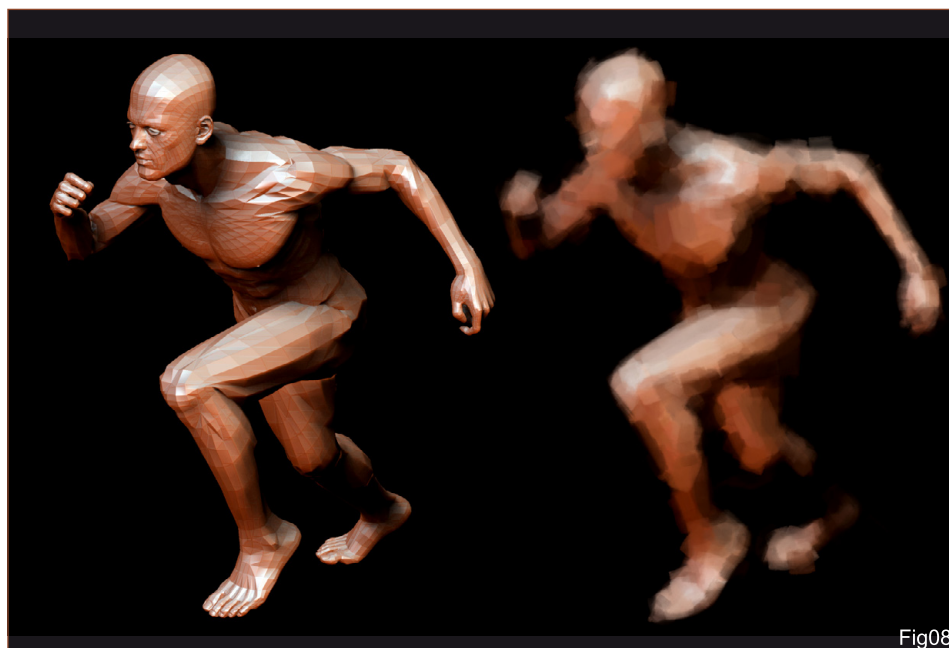
Fig08

Summary

Although this brief overview may not completely encompass the full extent of these basic art elements, I hope that even in its simplicity it has left you with a somewhat clearer understanding of what they are and how they can be used to create better images. In the next part of this series, we'll be taking a look at **colour theory**. See you next month!

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Visiting Mother-in-law

"As I thought of the silhouette of my character, I decided that it was too symmetrical, and so I considered adding another character to the scene to make it more interesting…"

Read how Denis Zilber created his image, 'Visiting Monther-in-Law', using Painter…

Visiting
Mother-in-law

Created In:

Painter

I started with a quick sketch on a relatively dark grey background. It doesn't matter actually what background you start on – you can start with a black or white one if you like, but I personally prefer neutral grey, because it gives you the added possibility of adding bright colours to your sketch and to make nice highlights, as well as shadows.

I had no idea what I was going to paint at this point, only some interesting form which came to my mind recently: a long-legged camel with a guy on top wearing a huge turban. All proportions have to be exaggerated, but still not caricatured – maybe something a little cartoony (Fig01).

Here I started blocking-in the main colours and working out the lighting. Because my character was going to be a kind of desert nomad, the lighting had to be strong. I wanted to create the desert at noon so the sun had to be in zenith. I didn't mess with the details at this point; it is a very rough sketch and is all still changeable at this stage (Fig02).

I had an idea about lighting and colouring and I put away my sketch, starting with a new layer in Painter. I began with a line drawing with all of the possible details, refining the curves of my character and trying to make it as interesting as possible.

As I thought of the silhouette of my character, I decided that it was too symmetrical, and so I considered adding another character to the scene to make it more interesting. So I drew a lady for my nomad. I made a line drawing
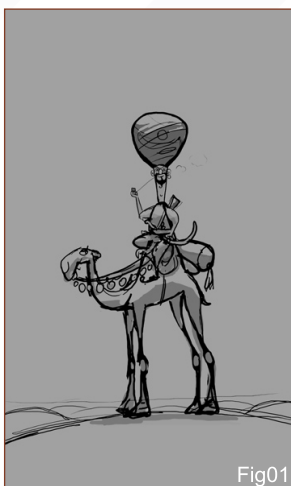
Fig01
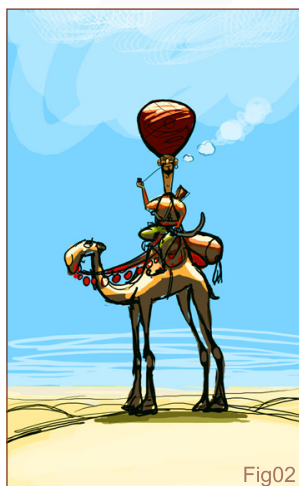
Fig02

Fig03

Fig04

without using any preliminary sketches. Each
character was drawn on its own layer to make
my composition more flexible, as I may have
wanted to move them during the creation
process (Fig03).

Once again I started blocking-in the colours, but
on the detailed line drawing this time. This was
going to be my final colour sketch before moving
onto the detailed painting (Fig04).

Finally, I started to paint my nomad. I hid the
other character's layer as I didn't need it at this
stage. I tried to make my character as detailed
as possible, even though I know that most of the
details won't be seen in final resolution. Here I
put a simple background behind the character;
this is not the final one, but it puts my character
into a good environment with the appropriate
lighting (Fig05).

Fig05

At this stage, I started to work on the nomad's wife. As a matter of fact, it was pretty straight forward from here onwards, because I already solved all of the lighting and colouring issues two stages ago; the only thing I had to do here was to add some details. At this point, the background was still simple; I just had to make sure that my characters felt comfortable within the scene. Besides, I still didn't know exactly what was going to be behind them, because at this stage I wasn't sure if I was going to leave it as it was (Fig06a and b).

Fig06b

Fig06a

I looked at the image once more and I found it pretty boring without an appropriate background, so I started to paint an old wall, some trees and a building behind the characters. To add an oriental atmosphere I also added three minarets. This was all done pretty quickly and with no fine details (Fig07). And that's all, folks!

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Fig07

"I knew I wanted a dark image, so I flooded the canvas with a dark tone that I could build upon..."

HATEFUL
DRAFT

A concept drawn from a rotting fish dragged off a shore line, James Wolf Strehle uses Photoshop to create an appropriate mood to suit the final image...

HATEFUL DRAFT

Created In:

Photoshop

Step 1:

Generally, I like to start out with a sketch, but for this piece I had the confidence and vision to head straight into the painting stage. I knew I wanted a dark image, so I flooded the canvas with a dark tone that I could build upon. Using
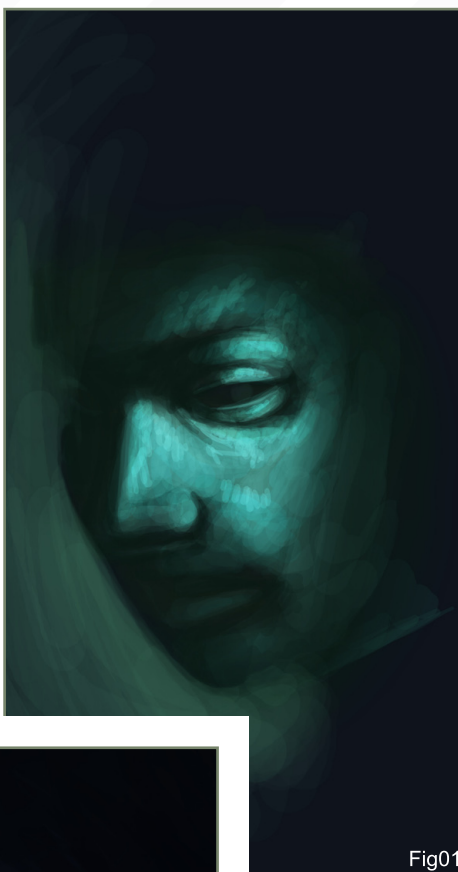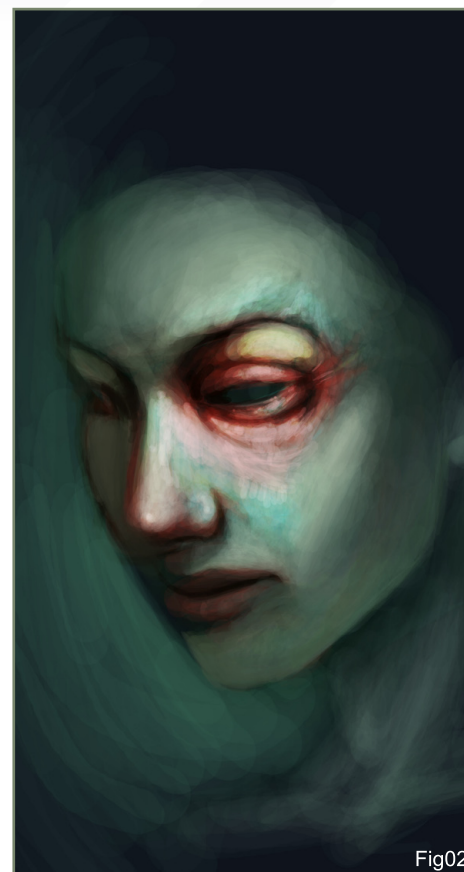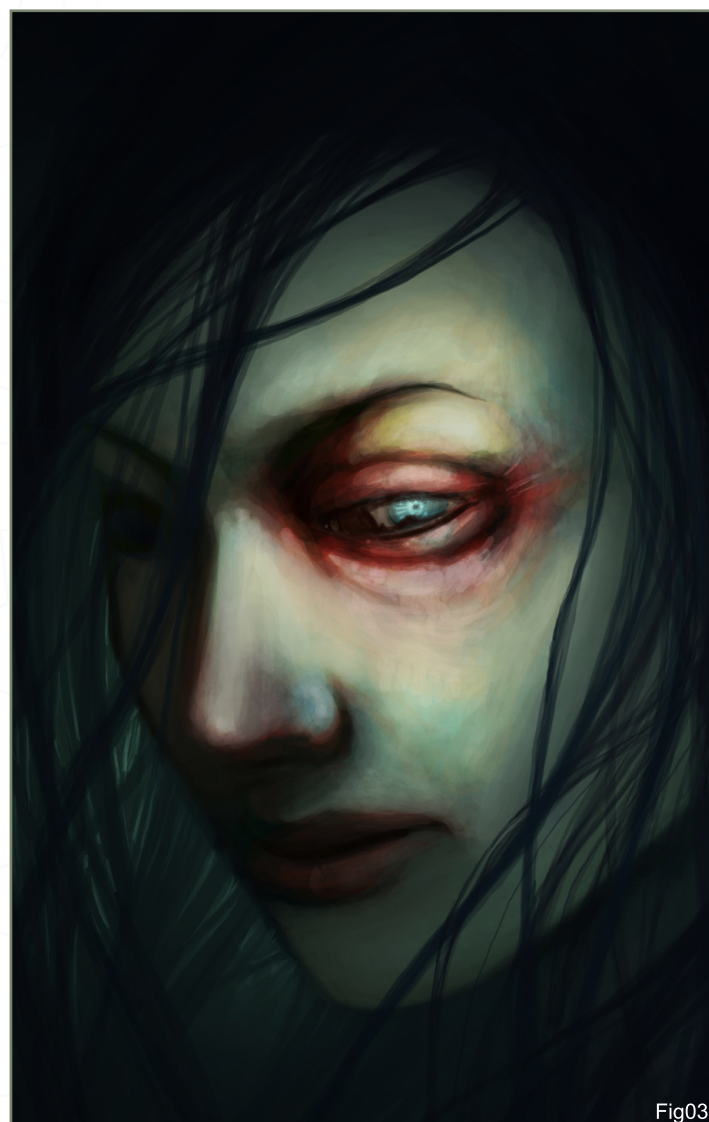

Fig01

Fig02

Photoshop's Airbrush tool, I started slapping on simple light to give shape to the face that I planned on painting. I kept it very loose, not worrying about the anatomy. My goal for this stage was to find an appropriate angle for the mood I wanted. I knew the eye would be the focus of the piece, so I used the lighting to spotlight the attribute. Throughout the process of this stage, I was coming up with scenarios, events and moods that would be the driving force behind the piece, imagining what has led her to her current state and what must be going through her mind (Fig01).

Step 2:

After I had an angle that I was satisfied with, I started defining the anatomy a little to give her a bit more shape; I wasn't to critical because I knew that most of the face would be hidden, but I wanted it to be accurate enough so that I wouldn't have to guess later on as to where things were. I started adding in colours and making judgments as to what colours would suit the goal of the piece. I also wanted to make sure that the eye would stand out from the rest of the face. I chose to give the eye a rotting theme, using yellows and reds, and to emphasise it further I used a pale blue for the rest of her face. I wanted to give her a sickly look as well, so I tinted her nose to give it the feeling of sourness.

In this stage, I was focusing on the physical aspects such as the anatomy, and more importantly how to make the image both disturbing and captivating at the same time. It's easy to just be blatantly gruesome,

Fig03

but it takes a lot more work to make her truly disturbing. I had to figure out what would make the piece uncomfortable to look at, which is partly why I chose the eye because it is a very sensitive organ and any sort of damage to it tends to make people uneasy (Fig02).

Step 3:

Next I added the hair. I wanted to get it in early enough so that I would have an idea of what sort of skin surface would be visible. With the hair in place, I could start to refine the visible areas and really get into the rendering. I liked the roughness of the second stage, but ultimately decided to go for a smoother look. I adjusted the colours surrounding her eye to give it a bit more of a fleshy feel. I also started working more on the eye itself; I knew her iris would be a blue hue to contrast the reds around it, but I wasn't sure how I would be rendering it, just yet.

At this stage, I also started considering what would be covering her lower face. Originally

Fig04

I planned on hair but wanted something a bit more creative. The contrasting themes also started to make themselves present. She was beautiful yet repulsive; she drew you in and at the same time pushed you away. As I progressed I tried building on these themes further (Fig03).

Step 4:

This stage was all about the eye. The position was a bit off so I had to move it up before starting the detail work. Once that was done I continued to render, focusing on bringing her skin to life, whilst still keeping the odd tones. I added wrinkles and flaws to give personality, and fine-tuned the colours. I decided to give her bloodshot eyes to frame the iris, and made my final decisions on the hues. I wanted it similar in colour of the skin, but slightly off, making it stand out as much as possible. Lastly, I began work on the wet, glazed look, but kept it to a minimum for the time being (Fig04).

Fig05

Step 5:

Last step: I finished up all the finest details, such as the bumps and pores on the skin. This was done by simply dabbing the brush repetitively over the surface. I could have used a custom brush, but decided to take the long road that gave me more control. Next I added in the "stars" of the piece: the flies. When you see flies around something it usually means it's dead or rotting, so I felt these were critical for the success of the piece. I also knew that it would

most likely cause a reaction with the viewer. The concept came from a rotting fish that I had dragged off my shore line (thanks, rotting fish!).

Next came the veil. I wanted it to look slightly used, but I didn't want it to be so fallen apart that it would detract from the eye. I carefully decided to place a rip, and gold lacing to give the viewer a break to wander around a bit within the piece. If there was nothing else to look at, the viewer would see the eye and move on, so I wanted

to create a simple triangle to move around in. After the veil was in place, I made my last adjustments and streamed in the last bits of hair. The very last step was to crop her and give the piece its title: "Hateful Draft" (Fig05).

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DIGITAL ART MASTERS

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VOLUME 2

With the release of 3DTotal's new book, 'Digital Art Masters: Volume 2', we have some exclusive chapters for you...

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This month we feature:

'Reckoning Day'
by Philip Straub

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The following shots of the 'Reckoning Day' book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in!

Reckoning Day
By Philip Straub

MEMORABLE MOMENT CONCEPT DESIGN

Every Concept Designer in the entertainment industry must be able to successfully stage and visually describe a key or "memorable moment" that occurs in a game or film. With this type of Concept painting, staging, dramatic camera angle, and camera focal length should all be considerations when you begin planning out your scene. The goal here is to create the most dramatic and visually exciting scene possible from the tools you've been given. Usually a Concept Artist will be given a scene to illustrate or pivotal moment in a storyline to describe visually but, you can apply this approach to your own personal work by getting in the habit of developing a back story to illustrate from. I've been meaning to get started on a piece that focuses on a memorable moment in a story where a civilization is nearly destroyed by a 'natural' or, in this case, a somewhat unnatural disaster. I know I want to depict a lot of destruction and chaos, with plenty of smoke, fire and dramatic lighting. This scene is going to require quite a bit of reference gathering for the many different subjects I'm going to be dealing with in the scene. So, I start digging and gathering all that I need to get inspired and to gain a better understanding of what actually happens to buildings and the landscapes around them when a catastrophe occurs.

Fig.01

Fig.01

BASIC COMPOSITION, LIGHTING, AND VALUE STRUCTURE

The first thing I always do before beginning a new piece is to try to visualize the final painting completed. I imagine the scene is actually occurring in my head, moving the camera around, searching for the most interesting angle, looking for the most interesting subject matter, or character to focus on. With this painting, I know the focal point and dramatic lighting is really going to sell the piece so identifying where the highest point of contrast and main point of action becomes my first priority. At this point it's time for me to begin working out the overall shapes that will define the positive/negative shapes and overall composition. Before I begin defining the composition, I need to pick an aspect ratio or overall size for my canvas. Confident I want the painting to represent a fairly cinematic moment in the story, I choose a "landscape" type layout that will allow me to cover a lot of ground along the horizon line.

I almost always begin with a gray scale canvas and since I know the piece I'm going for is going to be on the darker side of the value spectrum, I fill the canvas with approx. 50% gray and build up from there. This process is a carryover from the way I used to work traditionally and allows me to focus on the simple value composition of an image before I begin even thinking about details. Really, all an image is, regardless of style, is a series of abstract shapes that are put together in such a way that they are representative of something familiar to the human eye. Nothing fancy here; I like to do my sketching with a few different brushes in Photoshop. Again, my focus is on creating positive and negative shapes that are pleasing to the human eye, keeping in mind what the most interesting lighting solution will be for my subject matter. I keep all of my reference I've gathered close at hand so I can be sure to be accurate with my depiction of the scene.

Next, I begin to define the lighting solution further as well as the focal point of the image, focusing on leading the viewer's eye across the canvas. To add additional interest to the scene I add some other smaller areas of interest in the composition to balance the main focal point and further lead the viewer's eye (Fig.01).

POSITIVE/NEGATIVE SPACE, AND SCALE

Positive space is usually defined by the areas of a painting or drawing that are occupied by a form or forms. Negative space is those areas of the painting or drawing which are not occupied by forms, i.e., "empty" or negative space. Simply put, there is no such thing as background. In other words, all areas of the work are equally important – there is not a background area which can be left unconsidered. Now my focus is on finding a balance between what I call "the hide and go seek" of the foreground, middle ground, and background that define the positive/negative shapes.

Depending on the type of image I'm creating I may spend more time in the sketch stage then I am with this painting but, since I have a wealth of reference and building blocks to draw from, I'm going to move straight to defining my basic scale and details now. I actually have a few cityscapes created with simple 3D geometry... so I grab a few renders as well as some of the photo references I gathered earlier and begin to lay out the scale of the city as well as further refine the perspective. The technique I use here is very basic, just lots of skewing, scaling, and distorting until the overall perspective feels pretty good (Fig.02).

COLOR

The Concept Artist or illustrator can and should use color to affect his/her audience. Just like you would use composition, camera angle, lighting, and perspective to create a mood or environment that helps to tell a visual story, color is just another tool at your disposal. As you begin constructing a palette for a painting it's important to keep in mind what

Fig.03

you are trying to accomplish with your piece. If you want an area in your painting to "pop out", then you might want to place a "warm against a cool" or complements next to each other. Conversely, if you are trying to create a serene mood in a painting you probably wouldn't want adjacent complements.

The first thing to establish here is the sky! In a landscape image the sky is your most important component; it defines the color and temperature of your light, the color and temperature of your reflective light, and the color of your shadows. I grab a few different sky references I think will fit the scene I'm developing well and begin placing them carefully into the scene. Using a variety of layering techniques I erase and paint where needed (Fig.03).

MORE DESTRUCTION

With my basic color palette established I begin to push the destruction element that I want to depict in the scene. First, since I've created a few paintings like this before, I go to one of my brush sets and load up some smoke and fire brushes. As I add these elements I need to be careful to maintain a pleasing value and color composition. First, I create a new layer and begin painting in the fire around the focal point, experimenting with scale and layer modes until I get the desired effect.

Next, I begin to add some dramatic plumes smoke to further accentuate the destruction occurring in the city. Again, drawing from my custom brush set, and photographs I gathered in the beginning of the process, I begin painting in, first the smoke around the focal point, and then around the middle ground and foreground areas of the city. Establishing the middle ground and foreground smoke will help to define my scale by overlapping and layering one plum of smoke in front of the other (Fig.04).

Fig.04

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